A PRISONER OF THE GURKHAS

F. P. Gibson

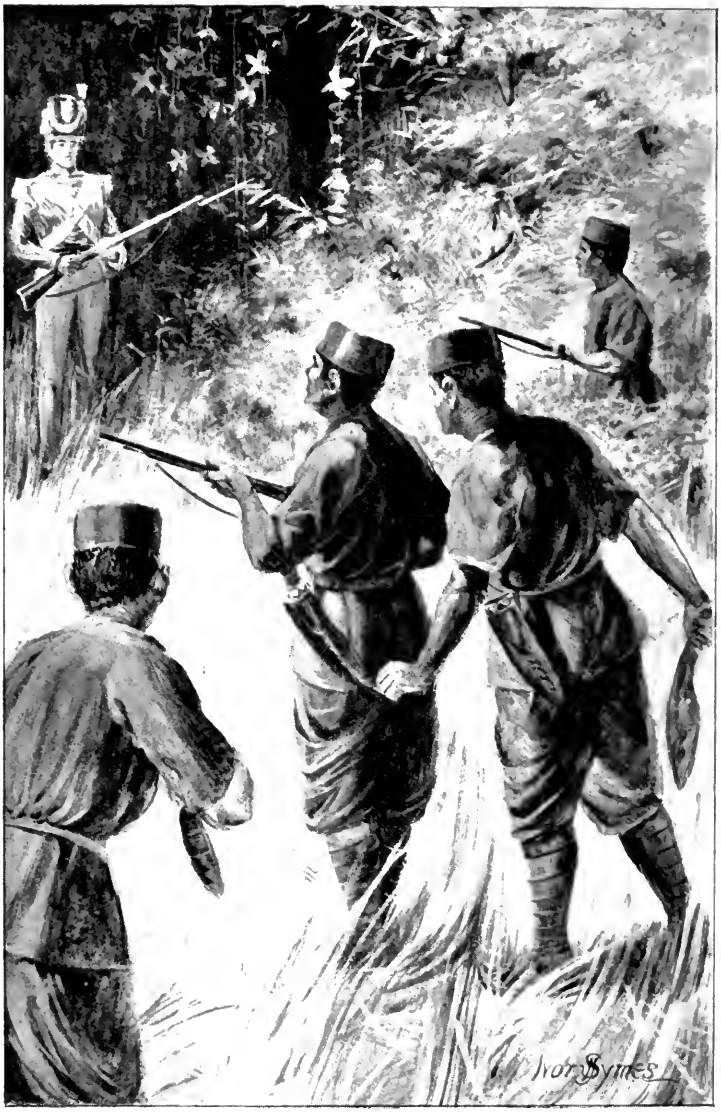
TREVER & ENGLAND
CARR LANE, HULL

3/6

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

http://www.archive.org/details/prisonerofgurkha00gibbiala

A PRISONER OF THE GURKHAS



"COME OUT, YOU OTHER ENGLISHMAN," SHOUTED JASPAO

p. 80.

A Prisoner of the Gurkhas

BY

F. P. GIBBON

WITH 4 PLATES BY IVOR J. SYMES

LONDON
GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS, LTD.
NEW YORK: E. P. DUTTON & Co.
1904

Printed at the Motley Press, 18, Eldon Street, E.C.

PR
6013
G3438p

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	IN WHICH OUR HERO MAKES AN ASS OF HIMSELF	1
II.	JACK RUSSELL'S ADVENTURES BEGIN	15
III.	A SUSPICIOUS AFFAIR	28
IV.	THE BULLY PUNISHED.	39
V.	FOUL PLAY AND FAIR FIGHTING	51
VI.	THE GLORIOUS DEFENCE OF KALUNGA.	62
VII.	A MYSTERIOUS CRY IN THE JUNGLE.	70
VIII.	DISHONOUR OR DEATH?	82
IX.	"IT IS BETTER TO DIE THAN TO BE A COWARD"	91
X.	JACK GIVES HISTORY LESSONS TO THE GURKHAS.	107
XI.	JACK LEAVES THE FRYING-PAN AND TUMBLES INTO THE FIRE	123
XII.	THE DUEL	137
XIII.	JASPAO TURNS UP AGAIN AND GIVES "GOOD HUNTING!"	151
XIV.	"LO, I WILL STAND AT THY RIGHT HAND!"	170
XV.	FACING FEARFUL ODDS	181
XVI.	TRAPPED!	195
XVII.	THE LAST STAND OF THE BRIGANDS	208
XVIII.	A TERRIBLE ACCUSATION	222

CHAPTER		PAGE
XIX.	VICTORY CROWNS THE BRITISH ARMS AT LAST .	239
XX.	JACK AND FRANK ARE TRIED BY COURT-MARTIAL	252
XXI.	JASPAO THAPA PROVES A FRIEND IN NEED. . .	267
XXII.	GENERAL AMAR SING PAYS JACK A VISIT . . .	281
XXIII.	OUR HERO FINDS A NEW CHUM AND FRANK HAS TO TAKE SECOND PLACE	290

A PRISONER OF THE GURKHAS

CHAPTER I

IN WHICH OUR HERO MAKES AN ASS OF HIMSELF

"So you join your regiment on Thursday week, Jack?"

"We start for Portsmouth on the Thursday, but I haven't to join until the following week."

"I'm afraid you're looking forward to it? That is a very improper state of mind, Jack, when the idea of leaving us all should fill you with grief."

The speakers were Margaret Upton, a graceful and dainty girl of twenty-two, and Ensign John Collingwood Russell of His Majesty's 162nd Foot, just gazetted. Jack Russell had reached the mature age of sixteen on this very day. His mother considered him a rather handsome boy, and maintained that his hair was of a lovely auburn and that his freckles were merely marks of genius showing through the skin. But at school he was known as "Carrots" and was thought by no means lovely, though well liked and respected for his prowess in all games for which either skill or strength was required. There he had few thoughts beyond cricket and football, fishing and fencing, and little ambition save to learn the least possible amount of Latin and Greek in the greatest possible period of time.

In this deplorable ambition even his headmaster would willingly have admitted the lad's unqualified success; and as for cricket and football, was he not cock of the school?

Jack was simply a well-made English boy, healthy-bodied and healthy-minded, rather short for his age, with hair that was inclined to be red—though to call it "carroty" would be a libel—a freckled face, a merry expression and a pair of honest, steadfast eyes.

From his childhood our hero was firmly resolved to follow in the foot-steps of his father, General Sir John Russell, and adopt the profession of arms; the General had approved and Lady Russell had given way. Now that the time for parting drew nigh she regretted that she had not more strenuously opposed the idea. For Jack was her eldest son and her darling, and for his part the boy loved his mother passionately.

Because this day was the anniversary of the birth of the son and heir, there was a gathering in Claydon Manor House, Ensign Russell's home. The guests were few, and included some half-dozen cousins of various ages and one or two of Jack's nearer friends. For Sir John was not wealthy, and the Manor House and grounds were small. The baronetcy had not come to him by descent, but had been more honourably gained in recognition of a long and active service. Jack's father had fought by the side of Sir John Moore at Corunna; he had helped to drive the French out of Portugal, and being badly wounded in the performance of

an act of great gallantry at Talavera, had been placed on the retired list, promoted to the rank of Major-General, and granted the handle to his name. His was a younger branch of the family that had owned the Claydon estates for many generations, the present Squire and owner of Claydon Hall being Mr. George Russell, the son of the General's elder brother. Miss Upton, who was engaged to be married to the Squire, had captivated the hitherto adamantine heart of our ensign, who worshipped her from an immeasurable distance with the pure devotion that a charming and adorable woman often unconsciously inspires in the mind of a healthy boy. Margaret Upton was good to look upon, good to listen to and good to know. Of rather less than medium height, with good features, hair of a rich brown and straightforward humourous eyes that matched the hair, her face was an index of her character. Try as Jack did to conceal his admiration—and the poor fellow imagined that no one suspected!—his goddess soon discovered it, and it must be confessed that the divinity was human enough to be pleased. She knew that at his age the sentiment could do him no harm. It was in fact a healthy sign that the first time the boy's heart had run away with him and got beyond control, the novel sensation had been inspired by such a woman as Margaret Upton, and that he had scoffed at the sickly love-making indulged in by some of his chums with girls barely in their teens. Margaret was in his opinion a being of an entirely different and superior order; she was a real chum,

as good a friend as any fellow he knew, with her wonderful grace and charm thrown in.

His cousin, Mr. George Russell, a man of thirty, who was over head and ears in love himself, was flattered and pleased by the ensign's admiration of his future wife, and his opinion of Jack's taste and judgment increased greatly.

"I'm not altogether glad to go, Margaret," our hero replied with some hesitation. "I do hope, though, that the 162nd will join Wellington before long. It will be a shame if we have to stay at home."

"Ah, Margaret," sighed Lady Russell, a beautiful woman, sweet and gracious. Though her hair was beginning to turn grey, she was still very active and strong, and as a rule full of high spirit, merry and humourous; but to-day she was realizing more and more the great loss she was about to sustain. "Ah, Margaret," she said, "will men never regard these horrible wars from our point of view?"

A few moments' silence followed, and the mother, afraid lest her melancholy should spoil the young people's pleasure, observed:

"Don't you know, Jack, that your uniform arrived this morning? Why have you not tried it on? Go and do so; we want to see how you look."

Harry, the second son, a young scamp of thirteen abetted his mother's appeal.

"Oh, do oblige, Ensign Russell. We know that even your rare beauty will be enhanced by the gaudy raiment. Solomon in all his glory was never an ensign in the 162nd."

"Shut up, kid!—It can wait until I go to bed, mother," Jack replied.

Secretly he was yearning to try on the new costume, and the vanity was excusable, for what boy of sixteen in a similar position would have been free therefrom. At the same time he felt it unmanly to deck himself out and submit himself for admiration, and the fear of posing in the presence of his boy friends and of his brother Harry was stronger than the desire to don the uniform.

"But I want so much to see you as one of the 162nd," Miss Upton begged. "And, then, if any alteration should happen to be needed, there is not much time to spare, and you ought to send the uniform back to-day."

"Go and stick 'em on, Jack," was Harry's advice, given with the lack of respect that characterizes the bearing of younger towards elder brothers. "Put 'em on, and I'll warrant you'll look fit to scare Boney. I'll come and be your valet."

"Do, cousin Jack," two girls of thirteen and fifteen joined in.

"It would please me, Jack," said Lady Russell, and after another show of reluctance the ensign gave way. They left the drawing-room and examined the contents of the tailor's parcel. With the officious aid of the younger brother, Jack donned the short scarlet jacket with its rows of buttons, its buff facings and the badge of the 162nd Foot,—the white trousers and the slightly curved sword. The task was no easy one for a novice, as the shell-jacket was tight-fitting and uncomfortable.

Yet Jack Russell was a proud lad as he descended to strike awe and admiration into the hearts of the juvenile members of the party.

"Come over here, Jack," said his mother; "you are in the shadow there. They look very well, and I know that my boy will not disgrace his uniform."

A half-suppressed titter from Harry and a series of hysterical giggles from his sister and cousins caused Jack to blush a deeper red. He turned to confront the splutterers, and Harry broke into a roar of laughter. Turning quickly again, the ensign beheld a twinkle in his father's eyes, an expression of amusement struggling with a look of indignation on the part of his mother, and—worse than all—a smile on the face of Miss Upton.

Quick as thought, Margaret checked herself, and exclaiming "It's too bad, Harry," she snatched something from the new jacket. The ensign caught the paper she was tearing up, and read in large print the words, "NO HOPE FOR BONEY NOW!"

Jack Russell was sensitive. He felt that he had been rather vain and only too anxious to show off his martial costume, although he had feigned reluctance; and boys, above all people, perhaps, know how it hurts to be turned into ridicule so that a room full of people are laughing at one. But that this should have happened in the moment of his pride, that mere girls of twelve and fourteen who ought to have been duly impressed by the grandeur of their brother and cousin, should dare to laugh at him, and above all that Miss Upton should witness his discomfiture and should be amused

thereby—this was too painful. Anger and confusion struggled for the mastery in his face, and with the brotherly remark, "You little cad, I'll pay you out," he strode from the room, banging the door behind him. As soon as he had changed, he promised himself he would get his rod and flies and stroll along the river until dark. They could finish his birthday party without him.

"Harry, how could you be so cruel?" asked Lady Russell.

"Poor Jack," said Margaret Upton reflectively. "I wish I had not laughed, but who could have resisted."

The General still seemed amused.

"There's no harm done," he assured them. "Though I remember when I first wore my uniform I thought everyone ought to fall down and worship, and I should have been as furious as he is. He will have to put up with worse jokes than that before many weeks have passed. Jack has the Russell temper, but he's a good lad and will come through all right."

After waiting ten minutes to allow the lad's anger to calm down, his father entered Jack's room. The once prized uniform lay thrown about the floor, and the ensign had nearly finished dressing. The General seated himself upon the bed. Neither spoke for a few seconds and Jack began, to feel rather ashamed of his display of temper.

"Well, Jack, my boy," Sir John began, "it was a bit rough on you."

"It was a very weak joke," Jack muttered.

"So it was. *Very* weak."

The red flush again showed on the boy's cheeks as he stammered:

"I suppose you mean, pater, that it was so weak that I need not have taken any notice."

The General nodded in assent and approval of his son's reasoning.

"How do you intend to pay Harry out?" he asked in a tone as solemn and serious as if he had been speaking to a man of his own age, discussing a deadly wrong.

Jack grinned feebly. Had his father reproached him for his exhibition of temper and been angry with him, the ensign might have stood on his dignity and sullenly posed as a much injured person. The serious manner, however, in which Sir John alluded to the affair merely served to show up the trivial nature of the joke that had been played at his expense, and Jack Russell was at heart too sensible a fellow not to recognize that he had acted foolishly.

"I'm sorry I made such an ass of myself, pater," was all he said.

The General held out his hand, the ensign grasped it, and drawing his heels together and standing straight as a ramrod, saluted as his father without another word left the room.

Jack presently followed him into the drawing-room, with, it must be confessed, a somewhat sheepish look on his face, bitterly regretting the outburst of temper that had caused him to appear so foolish. He was ready to acknowledge now

that his younger brother's joke would have been quite harmless had he but treated it as a laughable affair. But instead, he had made an exhibition of himself,—the one thing most abhorred by sensible and manly lads.

"Well, mater," he remarked, as he seated himself by Lady Russell's side, "I hope I looked gaudy enough, but I find this rig-out more comfortable."

"The uniform suits you very well, Jack," his mother replied, with a pride qualified and chastened by the reflection that the handsome dress betokened danger, wounds and perchance death for the light-hearted wearer.

"Very well indeed," agreed Miss Upton.

"*Bew*tiful," echoed Harry. "Lovely you looked, Jack,—just like Aunt Georgina's parrot."

Jack seized the scoffer.

"You young cub," he laughed, "I told you I would pay you out," and playfully jerking the "young 'un" off his feet, he laid him on the carpet.

"Margaret," he asked, pointing to the prostrate boy, "have you any use for *this* as a footstool?"

"No, thank you, Jack."

"Well, he certainly doesn't deserve such an honour," the ensign shyly observed, "so he may get up. But I must warn you, young 'un, not to scoff at the gallant 162nd."

Rapidly passed the intervening days,—all too rapidly for Lady Russell, and the time for parting quickly arrived. Good-byes were said, and with a mother's blessing ringing in his ears, Jack followed his father into the carriage, waving his handkerchief

until a bend of the road hid the old home from view. Their destination was Portsmouth, and from Chester they proceeded by the London coach. The weather was warm and pleasant, and the recently fledged officer, excited by the novelty and glamour of his new life, enjoyed the scenery, the bracing air, and the comfort of the old-fashioned inns. They passed through the midland counties without encountering any incident of an exciting nature.

In the hotel at which they put up in the city of Oxford, they saw for the first time a person who was destined to play an important part in our hero's life for the next few years. Philip Carruthers, a tall graceful lad with dark hair and eyes—doubtless he was termed handsome and "distingué" by the sentimental young ladies of his acquaintance—informed our friends that he was travelling by their coach as far as Winchester. The history of this young gentleman had been anything but commonplace, though the Russells were not aware of it at this time. His father was an officer of high rank in the service of the Emperor of Hindustan, and his mother was the daughter of the Rajah of Narwal, one of the Hill States of the North, a prince paying tribute to the Grand Mogul. General Carruthers had in his youth been a brilliant and promising soldier of the Great East India Company, and had distinguished himself, under Cornwallis, at Bangalore and Seringapatam, where the power of Tippoo Sahib had been broken.

Being of an adventurous disposition, a successor at heart of the old adventurers, many of whom

have done so much in past ages for Britain's renown, he had quitted the Company's army while still a captain, tempted by the offer of a high position in the service of the Mogul, and by his skill and undoubted courage had raised himself to eminence. Unfortunately, General Carruthers—for such was his rank in the Emperor's army—was an ambitious and unscrupulous man, one of the class of adventurers who do not add overmuch to the credit of their country. He had married a princess of one of the most powerful of the Mogul's feudatory states, in order to increase his power and influence. His wife was a beautiful woman, but far more unscrupulous than her husband, and Philip was their only child.

This Eurasian boy had been brought up with slaves at his beck and call, accustomed to see every whim gratified and every caprice indulged, spoiled and petted by his mother, who would allow no one to cross her darling's will, and he had been taught to consider his own pride and pleasures and desires as supreme. The father had seen the folly of this training and how his son would suffer and perhaps be ruined by it as soon as he should have to find his level among Europeans,—and General Carruthers was wise enough to see that the lad must mix with Englishmen if he would be a worthy successor to his father's renown. He had therefore insisted that Philip should have the benefit of an English education, and for some years past the boy had been living in England with members of the Carruthers family.

He proved an agreeable and intelligent companion,

and both General Russell and Jack were inclined to think well of their new acquaintance, when an incident occurred at Whitchurch that caused them to alter this opinion.

In front of the inn at which they halted for lunch and to change horses, stood an old blind beggar accompanied by the inevitable dog. With the exception of Carruthers, all the passengers had taken their places, but he, being a gourmand with a cultivated taste for wines, had remained too long at the table. The horn sounded and the coachman was on the point of starting, when the Anglo-Indian rushed out of the door. The beggar-man being in the way, he pushed him fiercely aside with a curse, and a savage kick for the dog. The poor old man fell heavily in the gutter, and the few coins that his tin contained flew in all directions. Carruthers laughed as he clambered up.

"Serve the old beast right!" said he, "getting in one's way like that."

"You brutal cad!" Jack exclaimed, and jumping down he helped the blind man to his feet.

"Stay one moment, coachman," General Russell ordered in a tone of authority. Addressing Carruthers, he sternly added:

"Are you quite devoid of humanity, sir? Just get down and replace the coins you have scattered, and then beg your victim's pardon."

The passengers signified their approval, but Philip Carruthers laughed insolently.

"Do you know whom you are addressing?" he demanded.

"Don't bandy words with me, sir. Are you going to obey?"

Their new acquaintance intimating that he had no such intention, Sir John laid hold of him by the coat-collar and proceeded to belabour him with the cane that he carried. Carruthers struggled fiercely, but the old general was still strong and active, with muscles of steel, and there was a masterful light in his eyes that cowed the Asiatic in Carruthers. The blows rained upon his back and shoulders, and changing his tone from curses, the blackguard took refuge in appeals for mercy, promising to do all that had been asked. He descended, and still muttering threats, began to pick up the fallen and scattered coppers.

"Now apologize for your brutality," the General ordered when the first task was accomplished.

"No, I'll be — if I do that," Carruthers whimpered, for the fierce and haughty temper of his mother and of a long line of princes revolted at the idea of lowering himself still further.

"Very well, sir."

The argument of the cane soon produced its effect, and an ungracious apology was tendered.

"Now you may go, sir, and may God give you grace to be ashamed of yourself." As he said this, Sir John placed a crown piece in the blind beggar's tin, and cried: "Go ahead, coachman."

Availing himself of the permission, Philip Carruthers again mounted to the top of the coach, taking a seat as far as possible from the irate and muscular veteran who had made him "eat dirt"—to

use the phrase of his mother's people, and whom he hated with a bitter, deadly hatred. Had a pistol been to hand he would doubtless have shot the General without hesitation, so strong was his thirst for revenge.

The coachman shook the reins, the horn sounded, the crowd that had gathered parted before the impatient steeds, and amid a shower of blessings from Carruthers' victim and cheers from the passengers and crowd, the horses bounded forward, and the coach was soon beyond the little town, rattling merrily along the picturesque Hampshire roads.

At Winchester Philip Carruthers descended. Ignoring the General, he walked up to our hero, the glare of hatred in his eyes, and the working of his face showing plainly that he had been brooding in silence over the great indignity he had suffered.

"Some day I may have the chance of paying you out for this," he muttered. "I shall never forget you."

Jack stared contemptuously and the Eurasian walked away.

CHAPTER II

JACK RUSSELL'S ADVENTURES BEGIN

GENERAL RUSSELL had said good-bye to the son whom he had launched upon his career. In simple language he had reminded Jack that he was now an officer and must ever be a gentleman, that he must do his duty to the glory of God and of his country, and that death must be preferred to the disgracing of his regiment and race.

"And mind you, Jack," the old gentleman had added, as the last farewell was said, "keep that temper of yours under control; it has a habit of running away with you. You are now starting on a career in which you will have to train yourself to control others, and no man can do that properly who cannot govern his own passions. Good-bye, Jack."

"Good-bye, father, I'll try. Give my love to mother."

The 162nd was a good regiment, and Jack Russell was not long in settling down to his new life. His messmates proved an agreeable set of gentlemen, and the new chum soon took a sincere liking to three in particular. These were, first, Lieutenant Knowles of his own company, a good-natured and very considerate fellow of about three and twenty,

who took great pains to instruct Jack in his duties as soon as he saw that the boy was willing to devote himself seriously to his profession and was no shirker. Lieutenant Knowles had only been in the 162nd for a month or two, but he was already a favourite with the men. He was too quiet and unassuming a man to please all the officers. Major Brooks, the second in command, likewise took second place in Jack's good opinion. He was the most popular man in the regiment, being greatly liked and respected by both officers and men; and this was only his due, for Major Brooks was a good officer and a good man.

The third in Ensign Russell's esteem was the regimental surgeon, Doctor White, and he was a Christian gentleman. Colonel Gregory, who was in command, was a cold and stern man, at times disagreeably harsh, but he was brave as a lion. At first Jack took a strong dislike to the colonel, especially after having to endure a severe reprimand one day that he came on parade with a jacket button unfastened. But later on he conceived a certain amount of respect for the "old man," though he could never really like him. Colonel Gregory's irritable manners had been made worse by disappointment in the later years of his career. He believed that he still remained a colonel simply because he had no family influence, and when he saw a younger man promoted over his head to the dignity of a general officer, he put it down to the fact that his rival was related to a certain peer who wielded great influence at head-quarters. This

and other fancied affronts, and the knowledge that he was unpopular in the regiment, had soured his temper and made him suspicious.

The remainder of the 162nd's Mess were very ordinary officers, fairly good fellows of average capacity. There were certainly one or two whom Jack did not like. They were the kind of young men who consider it very fine to drink and swear and gamble whenever they foregather; and yet they were not altogether blackguards, for when they found that the new messmate's tastes differed from theirs, they made no serious attempt to turn him into one of themselves.

"You are quite right," said one of them, Lieutenant Tolland, one day when Jack had courteously declined to take a hand. "We are fools for gambling, I know. You keep clear of it, young'un, and of the drink as well."

Which exceedingly good advice was pondered over by Jack.

Our hero had been in his quarters for a fortnight, when a new ensign joined the 162nd, and Ensign Russell felt at once two inches taller as he reflected that he was senior officer to someone now. Jack took a dislike to the new-comer, chiefly because Frank Dorricot—for such was his name—appeared so cool and collected in his new position, even on the very first day, instead of being confused and nervous and shy as Jack himself had been. He also noticed before long that Dorricot seemed to have plenty of money, for some of the tips he gave were extravagant for an ensign. Then the new-

comer kept a horse of his own, and as this was the very possession Jack most desired for himself he envied Dorricot's superiority and resented his coolness and, as he fancied, supercilious bearing. For Dorricot, who was taller than Jack, and was a wiry, speedy-looking athlete, certainly did not treat our hero with the deference due to a superior authority, but addressed him as though Jack, and not he, had been the new-comer.

Ensign Russell yearned to become a good horseman, but had had little opportunity of practising at home. He therefore spent a goodly proportion of his allowance in the enjoyment of this luxury. One day, a week after Dorricot's arrival, duty being over, he repaired to the mews from which he had on several occasions hired a horse, and there he demanded "Paddy," the steed he had previously ridden and one that suited his size.

Being without a companion on this particular afternoon, he did not ride very far, and was indulging in an easy canter over the downs on his homeward way, when he perceived Dorricot in front, also on horseback. The recently joined ensign, hearing the clattering in his rear, turned round in his saddle, then pulled up and awaited his comrade.

As he did so, "Paddy" took it into his stupid head to shy as a large piece of paper was blown by the wind straight into his face. The frightened horse swerved violently to the right, and straightway placed his off fore-foot in a rabbit-hole, stumbling badly. The abrupt change of motion loosened Jack's grip—it was not too firm at the best of

times—and the stumble, coming before he had recovered, upset the lad's balance completely, and though "Paddy" righted himself at once like the old campaigner he was, our ensign could not. Off he came, pitching over the animal's shoulder on the soft and rather sloppy turf.

He was quickly up, however, his face aflame at the thought that such humiliation had been witnessed by a brother-officer, and, above all, by one who was rather a swell and a first-rate rider into the bargain.

"I say, Carrots," began Dorricot, "not hurt, I hope?"

Now Lady Russell would never allow that her son's hair was other than auburn, and Jack himself was ready to uphold the mater's opinion (on some few matters) before the whole world. He also believed that Dorricot was laughing at his undignified dismounting,—as in truth that young man was.

"Who are you calling 'Carrots'?" he angrily exclaimed. "You conceited young—young——" Here he stopped, leaving the sentence incomplete, being unable to supply a sufficiently suitable epithet to relieve his wounded pride.

"Oh,—you're mighty polite: I was alluding to you, if you want to know,—because your hair's of rather a ruddy hue, you know," Dorricot coolly replied.

"Will you fight?" Jack demanded hotly. "And I'll make your nose rather ruddy."

"With pleasure, dear boy. Did you learn to ride in a circus, may I ask?"

Jack's face was much redder than his hair, as Dorricot dismounted. The youngsters made their horses fast to the nearest fence and stripped.

The combatants proved equally matched, and apparently equally well versed in the scientific art. Five minutes sparring resulted in little damage, and then Jack fulfilled his prophecy by landing his opponent neatly over the nose, drawing blood. Frank quickly retaliated by cutting the other's lip, but except for these slight casualties the defence on either side was too good for the attack, so for a time they drew no nearer to a solution. The dumb brutes looked on at their masters' doings with eyes that seemed to express their wonderment.

Suddenly Jack Russell perceived the humourous side of the situation. A smile began to dawn on his hitherto frowning countenance, and, observing it, Frank could not keep back an answering grin, that showed diabolically through the blood besmearing his face.

"Stop a bit!" said Russell. "It strikes me that we're a couple of idiots."

The other at once lowered his hands.

"Think so?" said he.

"Well, after all," Jack declared, "I *did* come a cropper, and there's no denying that my hair *is* rather inclined that way, so I'd no business to fly at you as I did;—but, all the same, if you want to fight I'm game."

"Me too, for that matter;—though I don't know why we need, and p'raps it was a bit too cool calling you nicknames when we hardly know one another."

"Oh, that's all right; you see I've such a vile temper, and it does make a fellow look small when he tumbles off a horse, like a sack of potatoes!"

"It does so," agreed Frank. "I've done it myself many a time, and then I've felt as though I'd have liked to kick anyone who happened to be watching."

Somewhat comforted by this assurance, our ensign was ready to offer the olive-branch.

"It strikes me," said he, "that we might fight all day at this rate, without deciding who's best man, so we may as well shake hands right away,—at least I'm agreeable if you are."

"You're a decent sort," declared Frank, as he held out his hand, "and you can fight for your size, I will say that for you, Carrots!"

Jack laughed as he took the proffered hand.

"You can call me that now, as we've been introduced," and from that moment they became the closest of friends.

Once more astride their steeds the lads rode home side by side, in perfect amity, talking of their prospects and hopes for the future, and also discussing the likelihood of the regiment being ordered abroad and the chance of seeing active service.

Soon came bad news,—bad, that is, in the opinion of our two ensigns, but glorious news for wiser folk. They had been dreaming of fighting the great Corsican under the idol of their boy-worship, Wellington, and now the tidings arrived that "Boney" had been worsted, and that the British were entering France. Some Russians and Prussians were there

also, but they counted for little in the youngsters' minds, thick-headed Britons that they were!

A few days later the prospect cleared and the outlook became considerably more cheerful. Peace seemed likely to be assured on the Continent before very long, so an order came for the 162nd to prepare to embark for Hindustan.

There was great excitement when the news became known, some of the older hands being by no means pleased, but the majority were elated by the chance of adventure and welcomed the prospect of "fresh woods and pastures new." Though disappointed that he and the regiment of which he was so proud to be an officer, had lost the opportunity of measuring themselves against Napoleon's splendid army, our hero looked forward with intense excitement to the marvels of the mysterious East. The tales of the wealth of the Indies and the gorgeous splendours of the Moguls were calculated to fire the imagination of more stolid people than our young ensign.

Whilst the preparations for departure were in progress, Jack Russell was introduced to a new mess-mate who had unexpectedly appeared upon the scene, and to his amazement and, it must be confessed, to his disgust, he recognized the object of his father's indignation at Whitchurch, Philip Carruthers. It turned out that the sweet-tempered young man was a distant cousin of Colonel Gregory. General Carruthers had destined his son for the British army, and as his family had influence they had been able to purchase a commission, and with

the colonel's assistance, Philip had been gazetted to the 162nd as soon as it became known that the regiment was ordered to the land of his birth.

Carruthers returned his brother-ensign's distant salutation equally coldly, but showed no sign of hostility, treating him indeed with ceremonious politeness. With him came his servant, Guman Rawat, a subject of the Rajah of Narwal, General Carruthers' brother-in-law. Guman Rawat was a short, sturdy young Hindu, light-complexioned and clean-shaven except for a short moustache. On the day following their arrival Jack perceived the master pointing him out to the servant, but pretended not to observe. However, there was nothing to complain of in the Hindu's manner, which was courteous to the point of obsequiousness to everyone, officers and privates alike, but Jack noticed that the man could never meet his eye, so he put him down as a shifty, suspicious character.

At length the day of embarkation dawned. Some of the officers went on board the troopship at an early hour to see that everything was in order for the reception of the regiment, and the men shortly followed. Jack Russell and Frank Dorricot were both engaged in superintending the unloading of the stores from the carts, and were among the last to leave the shore. They had taken their places and the men were about to push off, when Ensign Carruthers left the boat by the side of which he had been standing, and called to his native servant:

"There's more room in this boat. Come along, Guman Rawat."

He entered and was followed by the dusky retainer bearing a box. The men gave way and pulled leisurely towards the "Assaye" troopship that was to carry the 162nd to Calcutta. In the open sea beyond, the water was rough, and even here, sheltered by the Isle of Wight, there was a good swell and the waves broke over the bows. Carruthers and Frank Dorricot clambered up the ship's side by the rope ladder that was let down, and Jack stepped to the gunwale and was about to seize the rope when something happened.

Guman Rawat, the Hindu servant from the hill-country, standing just behind Jack, had raised his master's box to his head, when the heaving of the little boat caused him to stumble heavily against the ensign, just as the latter was in the most precarious situation. The box slipped from the Hindu's grasp, and striking Jack's shoulders, knocked him into the water, the box falling on him. A shout of alarm rose from the spectators, who rushed to the side of the towering vessel. With a cry of horror Guman Rawat threw off his outer robe and plunged in after the victim of his carelessness.

Jack could not swim a stroke, though an adept at almost every other branch of sport and recreation, and the blow from the box had dazed and almost stunned him. He had fallen into a trough of the waves and the waters closed over his head. An indescribable terror seized him: he tried to struggle, but his arms and legs seemed weighted down by a remorseless power. Suddenly the water seemed to sink lower and his head

appeared above it, and at the same moment a heavy body struck him. This was Guman Rawat who had plunged in almost atop of the drowning boy. Jack flung out his arms and managed to seize the Hindu's clothing, and again the cruel water closed over him. Down he sank dragging his would-be rescuer with him. The Hindu roughly loosened the ensign's hold, grasped the boy's arms and presently Jack became dimly conscious that he was breathing the air again. Guman Rawat shouted and splashed, making desperate efforts to hold the lad up, but the breathing space was short; they went down again together, and Jack knew no more.

When he came to himself he was lying in a hammock on board the "Assaye," and Dr. White was seated beside him.

"Where am I?" Jack murmured.

"You're all right, youngster," the doctor replied. "You've to thank that plucky heathen and young Dorricot that you're here."

"Frank Dorricot? Did he help to get me out?"

"Lucky for you that he did. Guman, or whatever they call him, was doing all he could to repair his clumsiness, but he evidently isn't much of a swimmer, and you were dragging him down as drowning people generally do, and he might have been drowned with you. But Dorricot saw that the Hindu couldn't manage to rescue you, so throwing off his boots and jacket he dived in, took you from Guman and brought you to the surface, and the other chap just managed to save himself. A nice job we had to restore you."

"I hope it was worth the trouble, doctor."

"I'm not at all sure," was the reply.

The troopship was weighing anchor whilst this conversation was being held, and Jack, feeling very weak, soon fell asleep again, and did not waken until dawn. The weather was hazy and the ship was out of sight of the English coast. Our hero was soon able to resume his duties, and missing Frank at mess, found that his chum was down with violent sea-sickness. He went below to thank his rescuer, but that hero was in no mood for conversation, and cut short Jack's thanks by hinting that he didn't much care whether his friend had gone to the bottom, nor indeed whether he himself had accompanied him or not. So Ensign Russell delayed his expressions of gratitude until a more suitable occasion should present itself. Going on deck again, he found Guman Rawat in conversation with his master, and approaching, he held out his hand to the former and expressed his thanks and admiration of the Hindu's pluck.

"Indeed, sahib," replied Guman Rawat in good English, with a low salaam, "it is thy servant who must ask pardon for his unforgiveable carelessness. If your honour had not been rescued, thy slave would not have dared to save himself. Would that I had been a good swimmer that the sahib might more easily have been recovered."

But Jack would not listen to these protestations. He again thanked the man and insisted on his accepting a gift, though for some time the Hindu declined to receive it.

"He doesn't deserve it, Russell," Carruthers asserted. "What right had the clumsy beggar to be in such a hurry. My box is gone for good and you were nearly drowned through his carelessness. He deserves whipping instead of a reward."

Guman Rawat salaamed humbly as if he thoroughly agreed with his master's words, and Jack left them.

CHAPTER III

A SUSPICIOUS AFFAIR

ENSIGN DORRICOT soon got over his attack of sea-sickness,—a malady that did not cause Jack the least unpleasantness. Feeling hungry at last, Frank resolved to experiment on a biscuit; this excited his appetite, so he attacked some more interesting food, made a hearty meal and at once resumed his usual cheerful spirits. The two chums stood by the bows of the ship, leaning over the side to watch the forefoot cleaving the water and the dash of the sea against the wooden walls, and they spoke of the accident that had so nearly brought to a close the career of one of them. Jack found it very hard to express all that he felt, and his words of gratitude were curt and apparently ungracious, but the ensigns knew that each understood the other's inmost meaning.

"Did you see me topple over?" Jack asked.

"I did"—the speaker hesitated and glanced around to satisfy himself that none could overhear, before he added: "That nigger, Guman Rawat, is either a great fool or a very clever fellow. Have you ever injured him in any way, Jack? Has he any grudge against you?"

"No,—why?"

"Then he must be a fool,—a plucky idiot. But

honestly, old boy, I happened to have turned round as soon as I got on deck and was just above you, and it really seemed to me as though he let that box fall purposely against you."

"Nonsense! Besides would he have risked his own life to save me, if he had wanted to do me an injury?"

"I'm only telling you how it appeared to me. He was looking intently at you and he seemed able to balance himself quite easily as the boat rocked. Then just at the exact moment when the least blow would be sure to knock you over, he stumbled against you and let the box fall. Of course it must have been sheer clumsiness, but it appeared intentional."

"How do you get over this, though! Why should he jump in and help to keep me up, if he had planned it?"

Dorricot paused before replying, and glanced round to see that no one heard.

"My dear Jack," said he, "*did* he help to keep you up?"

"What *do* you mean, old man?"

"Only that you would have come to the surface more easily without his help, and I could have got you out all the sooner. When I dived down you were both under water, *and that Hindu was keeping you down.*"

"Of course," replied Jack, "that's because he's not an experienced swimmer, and I suppose I had tired him by my struggles."

"Perhaps that's true. Of course I don't say he was doing it on purpose, but it's a fact that he was

saving you in the way best calculated to drown you. And what I don't understand is, that in spite of all his spluttering and splashing, he was quite comfortable below water and wasn't a bit exhausted when he came out, as a novice would have been. He's a first-rate swimmer I tell you, Jack."

The two chums remained deep in thought, ugly suspicions rapidly shaping themselves in Jack's mind. An elderly sailor sauntered up, and touching his cap, remarked:

"Narrow squeak you had, sir. Glad you were lucky."

"Thank you," said Jack. "I was very lucky. Whereabouts are we now?"

The seaman told them.

"That heathen chap's an officer's servant, ain't he, sir?" the man presently continued. "Servant of that darkish young gentleman who was talkin' to him yesterday when you gave the nigger a piece of gold?"

"Yes, servant of Ensign Carruthers."

"Um!" said the old sailor, "I reckon the gentleman's got a touch of the tar-brush himself. Excuse the liberty, sir, but they both seem pretty free with their money."

"I don't know anything about it," Jack replied, considering that the seaman was speaking with too great familiarity of an officer of the 162nd.

"No? Well, sir, as soon as you turns your back, the gentleman speaks to the heathen, and they chucks that gold coin into the sea and then looks towards you and laughs. I was only wondering."

Seeing that the boy officers did not offer to continue the conversation, the ancient mariner rolled away.

"There's some mystery about this business, Jack. What is it? You're keeping something back, I'm sure."

Jack related for the first time the story of Carruthers' brutal treatment of the blind man at Whitchurch, of the punishment inflicted by his father, and of the Eurasian's threat of vengeance. He stated that Carruthers had seemed to have forgotten his animosity and had always spoken courteously, and that he could hardly believe him capable of such foul play—of deliberately planning and attempting murder.

"It seems pretty clear to me, though," Frank persisted. "If that nigger had fairly tried to save your life, why should they throw the reward away? But if there was some underhand work, you can understand a proud fellow like Carruthers objecting to his receiving your money."

"Rummy kind of pride, that," Jack interposed.

"So it is, but some people who are not above doing mean things are proud on some points. I should advise you to beware of Carruthers and of Mr. Guman Rawat."

After considering the incident in all its bearings, the boys were reluctantly convinced that Carruthers had tried to revenge himself by plotting murder, and that the Hindu had, at his master's instigation, consented to become the instrument. They were boys of the true English breed and the thought

filled them with horror and loathing, and for some days they could hardly bear to be in the Eurasian's presence. They recognized, however, that the evidence was only circumstantial, and that as they had not the slightest chance of proving any plot, they had better keep their suspicions to themselves and allow Carruthers to believe that his intentions had not been unveiled.

The voyage was uneventful. There were no exciting incidents to relate, though the sail round the Cape was then a long and tedious affair, giving time for more thrilling adventures to take place than we should have nowadays in three such voyages. They were not even wrecked; the ship never caught fire; there was no mutiny; nor had Jack and Frank any thrilling races with sharks whilst bathing. After many weary weeks the "Assaye" cast anchor in the Hooghly mud, and the two boys entered into a new world.

A new world to them and yet a far older world than the one they had left behind, for the inhabitants of this great country had been civilized when their forefathers were brutal savages. From the moment of the troopship's arrival in the Hooghly and the quartering of the regiment at Gorakabad, the newness was too great, too overwhelming, to impress them thoroughly. They simply could not grasp it, and looked on as if in a dream or as if the events, the scenery, and the people were something about which they were reading.

Very strange it all was. No stage-coach with bugling guard passed them on the journey, but

in its stead little pony-carriages, or *ekkas*, with bright curtains, containing three or four brown gentlemen where there seemed only room for one, would swiftly pass them by, and slow heavy *hackeries*, or covered carts, would crawl along, drawn by sturdy mild-eyed oxen. For miles the groaning and screeching of these carts might be heard at all hours of the day, for the large wooden wheels were never greased.

No stolid English labourer stopped his plough to bestow a passing glance at the bright uniforms and glittering steel; no sturdy hard-featured farmer, leaning with elbows on gate, gazed at them with lack-lustre eye; but little naked Hindu children fled at their approach; graceful, tastily-dressed women and girls, brass water-vessels on head, or carrying baskets of marigolds to the temples as offerings to the gods, gazed at the unwonted sight; and lean brown husbandmen and villagers left their oxen and their rice-fields to scrutinize these white troops of "The Great Lord Company."

Along the dusty stretch of badly made road they marched in the evening and early morning, past endless rice-fields and acres of waving Indian corn: now under the shade of laden fruit-trees, now past groups of mango, *neeme, pipal*, and tamarind trees, that in the distance seemed quite homelike, reminding the perspiring troops of English sycamores, oaks, and elms.

Underneath the quivering leaves of the sacred *pipal* they would oft-times see some Mohammedan

fakir * or Hindu *yogi*, too absorbed in contemplation to deign to notice the regiment as it passed. Sometimes these devotees would squat on the bare ground, hardly moving a muscle throughout the livelong day, but more frequently the fear of snakes would cause them to make use of the *charpoy*, a light native bedstead that can easily be carried from place to place.

"This is hardly a case of cleanliness coming next to godliness," laughed Jack to his chum, as they observed the filthy skin and matted hair of the lean and bony ascetics, and the soldiers advised more than one *yogi* to "Go an' wash yerself, ye dirty old beggar!"

But not a sign did the devotees give that they heard a word of what was said.

More fields of waving corn, not yet ready for the sickle, were passed, more sugar-cane plantations and clumps of tall, graceful useful bamboo. A true lover of nature, Jack Russell longed that his people at home, or those chums who had collected birds' eggs or chased butterflies with him in the old school days, could have been there to see these incredible banyan trees, the heavily-scented wonderful flowers, the brilliant birds and brightly-coloured butterflies that flew around in clouds of azure, emerald, scarlet, bronze and purest white.

But longing was in vain and, indeed, he soon ceased to wonder at the gorgeous East. Before they had been settled in Gorakabad for a week

* Fakir literally means a "beggar."

the boys had become quite accustomed to the strange brown people with noiseless step, quaint garments, or lack of garments, and still quainter ways. The wonderful trees and plants and sweet-scented flowers caused them less thought than the dirt and noisome smells of the town, which stood out in striking contrast and which they could not escape. They no longer wondered at the army of kites and crows assembled in the *bazaar* or street of native shops, doing scavenger work and doing it thoroughly, nor at the old-fashioned teams of oxen ploughing and hauling. The marvellous Eastern buildings, the stately mosques with their graceful minarets and cupolas, the snow-white domes and red sand-stone palaces, the Hindu towers and temples, the scores of quaint picturesque houses with walled gardens of vast extent, full of flowers, shrubs, and laden fruit-trees, they now regarded as quite a matter of course.

Try as they would (and some of the officers and men tried hard, whilst others took no notice at all) the boys could not understand the thousand and more ways in which a Briton can shock or insult or defile a Hindu of high caste. On the march to Gorakabad trouble had been caused by the shooting of a wild peacock by a soldier, and his comrades only just succeeded in rescuing him from the hands of the villagers who were terribly indignant over the murder of the sacred bird. They had also acquired the knowledge that a Hindu would rather die than slaughter a cow to provide beef for the troops, and all butchering had to be done by

Mohammedans. Passing through the lines of the native regiment stationed at Gorakabad, Jack chanced to cast a glance at a group of sepoys who were preparing their evening meal. At once the men rose and threw the whole meal away, though this would mean abstention from food until the following day. The lad turned very red and was genuinely sorry. A captain of the native regiment accompanied him and, asking this officer for an explanation, our griffin* was informed that the glance of an Englishman or a low-caste man would defile the food, and that the sepoys believed that had they eaten the food after it had thus been rendered unclean, they would incur great penalties in the next world.

Ensign Russell informed his friend Dorricot of this incident, and both lads endeavoured to avoid hurting the feelings or wounding the religious susceptibilities of their dusky fellow-creatures, but all in vain. On the very next day the comrades passed a group of men who were preparing their frugal meal in the open, and though the lads refrained from glancing in that direction, they found that they had unwittingly defiled good food. In ignorance they had allowed their shadows, lengthened by the sun's declining rays, to fall on the *dahl* and rice, and thus the meal was again rendered unfit for any save low-caste men.

"It's all very queer," commented Frank, after the lads had expressed their regret for the mishap,

* "Griffin"—a new-comer in India, a term equivalent to the American "tenderfoot."

and had handed the Hindus a couple of rupees as compensation for the wasted food.

"It strikes me," said Jack, "that these fellows are more ready to make sacrifices for their religion than most of us Christians are."

That's true: and there's no sign of their being ashamed of their faith, however comical it seems to be. You don't see Christians putting everything on one side, like the Moslems here do, in order to offer prayer when the call comes, wherever they may happen to be."

"Yes," agreed Jack, "you can't help feeling ashamed of your countrymen when you see these heathen stick up for their religion whilst they neglect what they profess to believe. As you say, the 'Faithful' don't wait until the streets are clear of folk before they kneel down to pray. I'm ashamed of our Christians."

"So am I!" Frank emphatically assented, hastily adding—

"By the way, Jack, I've thought of asking you before, but I didn't like to,—though I know what a thoroughly good chap you are. Do you kneel down every night? I'm afraid I don't, so it's no use my feeling ashamed of my countrymen."

Jack blushed. "You're right, old boy! Our own beams first, before our neighbours' motes, eh? Well, I meant to, and I'm afraid I promised the mater never to forget it, but somehow I keep forgetting, and I haven't been down on my knees for a week or so."

"So we're nice people to talk of others, aint we?

You know I've no father, he was killed at Corunna, —he fell just after Sir John Moore was struck, and only a few paces away,—but the mater's a saint—a real saint, if ever there was one!" Frank repeated with emphasis. "And I promised her—same as you did—and I kept it up for some time; and I do it still whenever I think of it, only I forget as often as not. What cowards we are!"

"I'm glad you asked me, Frank, about this. It's funny that we Englishmen never talk to one another on these subjects, aint it? I should never have had the pluck to have mentioned it first, but I'll try to remember if you will. Is it a bargain?"

"Shake hands on that, Jack! Well, these niggers can teach us a lot, we must admit."

The chums walked up and down in silence, both feeling the better for the timely discovery of their lack of moral courage. Both were at the same time considerably humiliated, and occasional humiliation is good for the human boy—or man.

CHAPTER IV

THE BULLY PUNISHED

ENSIGN Carruthers had given no further sign of unfriendliness. Though he made no attempt to be more than ordinarily courteous and civil towards Jack, yet he always greeted him without any appearance of animosity or distrust. This state of things was not destined to endure, however.

A week or two after the 162nd had settled down in their new quarters outside the ancient city of Gorakabad, Carruthers gave evidence of the latent ferocity and selfishness he had inherited from his mother. Strolling in the bazaar, or native streets, one day, purchasing oriental curiosities to send home, our two chums were alarmed by hearing loud shouts of anger followed by shrill and piteous cries of pain.

They hastened in the direction of the noise and beheld a scene that made them ashamed for the honour of the uniform they wore. Philip Carruthers was holding and thrashing with a bamboo rattan a poor native boy of thirteen or thereabouts, striking him impartially over the head, shoulders and back with all his force. The miserable lad cowered in terror beneath the blows and, wailing piteously for mercy, collapsed utterly just as the ensigns arrived. The bystanders and shop-keepers looked on with

indifference, for the boy was only a *pariah*, an outcast orphan, whose sufferings were nothing to them. It subsequently transpired that the boy's offence had been to collide violently with Carruthers as he and some other urchins were chasing one another in play. The *pariah's* head as he turned the corner, had struck the Eurasian full in the stomach, and the result was the officer's undignified fall and the disappearance from the scene, as if by magic, of all boys save and except the wretched culprit, who had not been sufficiently alert.

"The brute!" muttered Frank. "He'll kill the lad. Drop that, Carruthers!"

The half-maddened savage redoubled his blows without deigning to reply, and Frank, who had reached the spot before our hero, struck the bully across the face. Loosening his hold of the boy, who sank to the ground and moaned with pain, Carruthers sprang at Dorricot with uplifted stick.

"Drop that rattan!" cried Jack. "Fight fair, you beast, unless you want to tackle us both."

Careless of what he did, Carruthers swung the bamboo round his head, aiming a blow at Dorricot's face that would have stunned him, had he not jumped backwards. Jack seized the weapon as the force of the blow spent itself and deftly snatched it out of their antagonist's grasp. Frank then went for the bully and planted another blow in his face, exclaiming:

"Fight me, you coward, not a child!"

If Philip Carruthers had inherited his worst qualities from his mother, he likewise possessed some of his

father's courage. Though nearly two years older than Dorricot, he was hardly any taller and not nearly so muscular and fit. He rushed at Frank like a tiger, and though he was no match for his opponent, he gave the boy a pretty severe mauling before he was vanquished. Thrice in succession he was knocked down, and his face was bleeding nearly as much as that of his unhappy victim whom Frank and Jack had rescued. Unable to continue the unequal combat, he turned away, reviling his enemies in the choicest epithets of his native tongue. He also informed them in English that they would both rue that day, and a wicked light came into his eyes as he made the promise.

"Where's the poor little beggar he was murdering?" Frank asked. "We must give him something to show that all English soldiers are not like that cad. Bah! that blackguard's no Briton, though!"

They looked for Carruthers' victim, but the young outcast had dragged himself from the scene and could not be found. He had had enough of the sahibs' dealings, and would not trust himself again within the white man's reach. From that day a hatred of the *Feringhis* possessed the boy, and forty years later he was one of the most active in that province to bring about the risings against their conquerors, the risings that culminated in the massacres of Cawnpore and Allahabad.

"Well done, Frank," said Jack Russell. "Are you much hurt?"

"No. Bah! the fellow's clawed my face though.

Scratched me! He's no Englishman! Well, I've spoiled his beauty for a few days."

"What a savage cannibal he is. His mother must be a nice sweet lady if he has inherited his tigerish qualities from her."

"His father is a harsh man, I've heard," Frank asserted. "Well, judging from what we've suspicioned already, he'll try to pay us out and he won't stand at trifles. We'll have to be wary and keep an eye on Guman Rawat, Esquire."

"I wish we could understand the lingo better," said Jack. "I've picked up a good few words already, but I can't string 'em together. I tell you what, Frank, shall we try all we can to learn and talk to one another in *Urdu*?"

"There are so many different dialects, it will be a tough job."

"Still, if we can get a smattering of *Urdu*, it ought to carry us through."

"Well, I'm game. I should like to be able to speak and understand."

Having come to this sensible decision, they sought out a Mohammedan scholar who agreed to give them lessons at a very reasonable charge. The *moulvi*, Muzaffar Ali, was a quiet good-natured man, tolerant of the Feringhis because he saw that their presence was good for the country, though he looked forward with confidence to the day when the Followers of the Prophet should sweep all unbelievers out of the land or, better still, when they should all be converted to the True Faith. The old man took a fatherly interest in the English boys before the third

lesson was over, They treated him with respect as a pious and learned man, not contemptuously as a mere "nigger," and he appreciated their courtesy and did his best for them and proved a capable teacher.

True, he told them once or twice with a sorrowful shake of the head, that he feared they were everlastingly damned, as infidels, but our ensigns thought they knew better, and smiled to themselves. With the assistance of Muzaffar Ali and by frequently conversing one with another in *Urdu*, and both being quick to learn, they soon became able to make themselves understood by intelligent natives, and were able to comprehend a little of what was said to them.

Little by little the ensigns contrived to acquire more knowledge of the best methods of dealing with these "mild Hindus." Mild, indeed they were. Servile and cringing before the white man whom they recognized as a superior being; obedient, patient, faithful and long-suffering where their caste was respected, our two chums found them at one and the same time very untruthful and very dishonest in all small affairs.

The Hindu had been accustomed to tyranny and oppression and he accepted his fate with resignation. Experience has always taught the lesson that where nations and peoples are subject to tyranny and are treated as slaves, or even where boys at school suffer from long-continued bullying, the oppressed protect themselves and their property by lying and perjury, and steal from others to make good what they themselves have lost.

For centuries the once proud and haughty Hindu had been crushed under the heel of the fierce Mohammedans who had poured into Hindustan from the North-West; his religion had been defiled and persecuted and his property and rights taken from him; his sacred cows had been driven into the holiest temples and there slain and their blood sacrilegiously sprinkled on the floor, so that those temples were for ever accursed and must be destroyed. He had patiently accepted his lot and had now had the satisfaction of seeing the Mohammedan power crumble and decay.

For though the Grand Mogul still reigned at Delhi, the capital of Hindustan, and though the British still paid this Emperor an annual tribute, acknowledging themselves his vassals in Asia, yet most men knew that the great East India Company was really the Emperor's master.

The curious estimation in which various animals are held greatly puzzled the men of the 162nd. Whereas the useful donkey, held in such respect by most eastern peoples, is here considered vile and unclean and degrading to touch, the far more objectionable monkey is holy and its person sacred. Troops of these mischievous creatures are found in every town, robbing orchards and damaging gardens with perfect impunity. This is because Hanuman, the great monkey-god, is beloved of the Hindus on account of his victories when he led the monkey-army against malignant demons in ancient days. He is regarded as a kind of Hindu St. George.

Our friend, the dog, and the useful fowl are also

unclean, whilst the noxious cobra is holy and must not be killed. People suffering from leprosy and other diseases are supposed to be undergoing punishment for the crime of having slain a cobra or snake of some species. But most holy of all is the cow. Our ensigns were therefore puzzled to witness the brutal treatment of oxen by their Hindu drivers. Instead of whipping the patient, stupid animals as they toiled on, hauling the heavy native carts, their owners urged them on by the simpler and much more cruel method of twisting their tails almost to breaking-point. Though the Hindu would die rather than shed the blood of an ox; though he would prefer a lingering death at the stake or any possible torture rather than eat their flesh, yet he does not hesitate to starve the animal or work it to death. With infinite disgust, Jack witnessed more than once some miserable bullock barely able to stand and with bones cutting through the skin, being forced by tail-twisting torture to draw those heavy *hackeries* along. When at length it could do no more and sank exhausted, the driver would proceed to light a fire beneath the wretched creature, until the excruciating torture forced it to stagger on once more. Yet an Englishman, who would have shot the poor brute and put an end to its misery, would have been accounted a sacrilegious and wicked demon.

To the boys' astonishment and amusement they soon discovered that every native of Hindustan is haunted continually by the dread of evil spirits, ever on the watch to do him harm. Elaborate pre-

cautions are taken against these demons, and they could not but smile at the idea of monstrous fiends, taller than the highest trees, or of the dwarfish imps, small enough to jump into a man's mouth, always lying in wait for the unwary; of the men-eating species whose souls are enclosed in the bodies of the familiar green parrots, and of the many other tormentors of Hindu peace of mind. But in spite of this apparent simplicity the Englishmen soon learned (as most Europeans have found to their cost) that their brown brethren are no fools and can more than match the white men in guile.

The men of the 162nd had become somewhat reconciled to their strange new life before they had been at Gorakabad many weeks. They no longer shot the kites and crows that flocked to devour the garbage of the town, for they had learned that but for these useful scavengers, the smells and filth would be too great for endurance. They had almost acquired a feeling akin to admiration for the cool cheek of the Indian crow, surely the smartest and most impudent bird in existence. The great, ugly, blue-grey crane with large pouch and bill, which they had by now learned to call "the Adjutant", was also tolerated. A greedy creature is the adjutant, a bird almost as tall as a man, with the good-fortune to possess a really wonderful appetite. So great was the voracity of these fowl, that the soldiers amused themselves by throwing bones, pieces of meat, fruit rinds, or even bits of leather or balls of paper, and roared with laughter as the long-billed gourmands fought and pecked one another in the struggle for the

dainties. One day an inventive genius amongst the soldiers caused a scene of indescribable merriment. Tying a bone to each end of a piece of string he threw them in opposite directions. With a rush and a flutter two of the adjutants secured the tit-bits, and swallowed and gobbled until the string was tightly drawn between the two throats. Then the fun began; one bird pulled and the other bowed. Then this one gave a pull and the first bowed its head, amid delighted roars from the spectators; and so the comical pantomime went on until the string was bitten through and swallowed. As the farce achieved such success, the soldiers, of course, repeated it day after day. Before long, however, a more cruel trick was played on the scavenger cranes. A soldier fastened a small packet of gunpowder by a piece of string to a bone, and lighting the slow match, threw the dainty morsel to one of the expectant adjutants. Eagerly swallowing the bone, the bird began to devour the string also, until, catching sight of the lighted end he flew into the air greatly affrighted. As he rose above them the gunpowder went off with a bang, and the crane was blown to bits, pieces of legs, claws, plumage, and bill dropping amidst the spectators, some of whom were delighted, and others disgusted. The soldier had another packet ready, and before the officers could prevent him he had thrown this also to the birds. Unwarned by the fate of his companion, a greedy crane seized the bone. Before he could swallow it, however, a second had gripped the other end and disputed its possession, and for a few seconds

they struggled. Then they simultaneously became aware of the fizzing slow match. With one impulse, the birds rose into the air, letting the bone drop from their bills. It fell by the foot of the thoughtless perpetrator of practical jokes, and the instant it touched the ground—before the soldier could move away—the powder exploded.

Private Williams of the 162nd Foot spent a week in hospital reflecting on the folly of practical jokes, and for some time after this episode the useful, though bad-tempered adjutants were free from molestation.

Before long, rumours of war floated in the air, coupled with the name of Nepal, a place of which Jack had never heard. He soon learned from the conversation at mess that this hilly kingdom, containing the highest mountains of the Himalayas, was ruled by a barbarous tribe known as Gurkhas or Gurkhalis, a race of small but very fierce and hardy men, who had conquered the other tribes and were extending their country in every direction. For many years past they had sent parties of soldiers to occupy portions of British territory, and instead of paying attention to the remonstrances of Lord Hastings, the Governor-General, their aggressions grew from bad to worse and they mocked at the British threats. A few days later, the officers and men of the 162nd were in a fever of excitement when the news was brought that the ferocious Nepalese had attacked a British Police Post and killed the men, for it was felt that this insult must be wiped out at any cost; and our two ensigns, coming of a warrior race,

were eager as any to punish the "cheek" of these *parbattias*. *

They had not long to wait. An army of 30,000 men with 60 guns was got in readiness to crush and teach a lesson to these insolent Gurkhas whose whole available force was less than 10,000, with old-fashioned cannon and firearms,—some indeed being merely armed with bows and arrows. The British had further ground of confidence from the knowledge that these 10,000 foemen could never be assembled at one spot to oppose the invasion as they were spread for hundreds of miles along the frontier, keeping newly conquered territory in subjection. No wonder that our soldiers felt sure of an easy victory.

The British army was in four divisions, each of which was to penetrate the mountain passes at a different point, and to General Gillespie's division a wing of the 162nd was attached. Sir Robert Gillespie —irreverently spoken of by the ensigns of the 162nd as "Little Bob"—was a general beloved by the soldiers serving under him, and especially by the men of the 8th Royal Irish Dragoons, his old regiment. Every Englishman in the army knew of his promptness and heroism at Vellore; Jack Russell and Frank Dorricot had more than once heard the story from the lips of the Irish soldiers, proud of their leader.

How at Arcot, nine years before, their colonel, enjoying a canter one morning before breakfast,

* Highlanders.

was met by a man riding hard to report the mutiny and terrible massacre at Vellore sixteen miles away. Without a moment's hesitation, Gillespie galloped off, attended by a few dragoons, having ordered the remainder to follow with the galloper guns. Arrived before the town, he found that the sepoys had massacred many of the Europeans and that the survivors were making a stand in the fort. Hauled up by the aid of a rope, Gillespie rallied and encouraged them until the galloper guns arrived. The dragoons then blew open the gates and cut down the mutineers.—Another feat of his was also gleefully told. At St. Domingo, in 1796, his quarters were broken into by eight desperadoes, six of whom he killed single-handed, whereupon the others fled. On his return to England Gillespie attended a levee of King George the Third, and that monarch's surprise at his boyish appearance was so great, that he exclaimed: "Eh! eh! What! what! This the little man who killed the brigands?"

Of such mettle was the general in command.

CHAPTER V

FOUL PLAY AND FAIR FIGHTING

In the autumn of the year 1814, three hundred men of the 162nd foot marched to Saharanpur, where Gillespie's division was assembling. This portion of the regiment was commanded by Major Brooks, and to the delight of our ensigns both were included amongst the fortunate ones. They would have been better pleased had not fate decreed that Ensign Carruthers should also go to the front. The remainder of the 162nd remained at Gorakabad.

Whilst waiting until the force should be completed and all the preparations made for the advance, Jack and Frank obtained leave for a few days' shooting. A well-known local *shikarri* was hired, and they set out in the early morning. They were both fair shots, and though game was not very plentiful, by noon they had secured several pheasants and pigeons,

"Don't you think it's about time for a little lunch?" Jack suggested.

"I'm game, old man."

They sat down by a spring pointed out by the *shikarri*, who retired to prepare his food at a short distance from the sahibs.

The meal over, the boys stretched themselves

under the deep shadow of a *pipal* tree, for the heat was too great at mid-day to permit of any exertion without considerable discomfort. Jack Russell was soon engaged in deep thought. Within arm's reach reposed the second prostrate form, whose owner seemed by no means inclined to trouble himself with unnecessary meditation, evidently considering sleep a far more blissful occupation, and one more greatly to be desired.

For that reason presumably, Ensign Russell prodded his comrade deliberately with his foot, until the slumberer began to stir uneasily and eventually raised his head, grunting:

"Can't you let a fellow sleep, Jack? What is it?"

"Say, Frank," replied the other, "I was just wondering what they are doing this moment at my old school. Don't it seem queer to think of the life we were leading twelve months ago?—not a bad time either. It hardly seems possible that things are going on just the same,—same masters, same old lessons, same playing grounds. I can't help fancying that I've dreamt all that!"

"Well, go and dream about something else, you Joseph, if that's all you have to show for disturbing a future general's beauty-sleep. And keep your great hoof out of my side!"

"Lazy hog! Go to sleep by all means! Give me soltitude rather than your entertaining society," Russell retorted, yawning as he spoke.

Indeed the boy's schooldays and even his home-life seemed no more than a curious dream. Here he was in Saharanpur, clad in red and white, with

a sword by his side, ordering "niggers" about in a wonderful tongue—half English, one eighth Hindustani, and the remainder sign-language,—as though to the manner born.

While his brother-ensign lay sleeping—and it must be confessed snoring faintly but happily—Jack Russell's thoughts wandered amid the old familiar scenes. He became hot all over as the recollection of the "side" put on when first he wore the uniform of the 162nd, came back to him.

"Time to start again," Jack observed after a while, "that is if we want to have any more sport to-day," and Frank reluctantly rose to a sitting posture, yawned twice, and proceeded to examine the priming of his musket. The *shikarri*, who had been patiently waiting, no sooner saw his sahibs ready for work than he sprang to his feet and they set off through the bush. Game, however, was less plentiful, and though they wandered for some miles up and down, their bag was only augmented by a couple of pheasants and two or three pigeons.

The sun was now sinking rapidly, and in India the darkness comes on suddenly, with no long twilight as in England, so our boys thought it time to retrace their steps. While still a couple of miles from camp the night had set in. The *shikarri*, carrying the spoils, walked about fifty yards ahead, unable to see his charges, but keeping in touch by reason of the noise made by their heavy English boots. The road was bordered by trees, shrubs and bushes, and they were walking along the most gloomy stretch when Jack suddenly stopped:

"Listen!" he said.

Though they strained their ears nothing could be heard except the high squeak of the bats that fluttered, wheeling, overhead, and the howling of jackals.

"What was it?" Frank enquired.

"I thought I heard footsteps close behind us," Jack whispered.

"It was only fancy. Come along." As he spoke Frank linked his arm within Jack's and they again proceeded, but the latter was still suspicious and on the alert, and from time to time he listened intently. He suddenly turned. Though he had heard no noise, instinct warned him of some invisible presence and of danger that threatened. Well was it for them both that he did so.

From the blackness of the gloomy roadside, a number of dim ghostly figures were darting towards them. With a cry of alarm to warn his chum, Jack sprang to one side, placing his musket as a guard in front of his chest. A knife blade struck against the barrel and glanced harmlessly off. Had he been a second later the steel would have been buried in his back.

Frank was less lucky. Though he had jumped aside, escaping the full blow of his assailant's steel, the point passed through his jacket and inflicted a flesh wound half way between the elbow and shoulder of his left arm. Jack struck at the assassin, who, with the force of his lunge, had blundered past him, and caught him on the head with the muzzle of his musket, and Frank, who had wisely left a charge

in his fire-arm, hurriedly let fly at the indistinct figures. The double howl of anguish that followed told that the spreading small-shot had hit at least two of the highwaymen. A second report announced the arrival of the *shikarri*, another cry of pain went up, and seeing that their surprise had failed and unaware that the other Englishman's musket was empty, the *budmashes* fled, carrying their wounded with them. The ensigns knew better than to attempt to follow.

With hearts beating rapidly they resumed their homeward journey, Dorricot saying not a word about his wound.

"What do you make of that, Jack?" he asked.

Ensign Russell was not ready with a reply, and Frank went on:

"I don't know what you think, but I believe that Carruthers is blackguard enough to be at the bottom of this, and I feel sure that he and his precious servant have had a hand in it. I only hope that Guman Rawat was one of the beggars who got a charge of small-shot in him."

"I think Carruthers knew where we were going," Jack assented. "He overheard us planning it, you remember, the other day,—in fact we were talking about it at mess. But still we have only very slight ground for suspicion, and these fellows are just as likely to have been *budmashes* with no motive except robbery."

"We must try to find out where he and Guman have been to-day. This is getting unbearable if they really have had any hand in it. I don't object

to fighting Gurkhas or any open enemies, but to have a scoundrel like that as one's comrade, and to eat with him and never know whether he's plotting your murder or not,—well, it's a bit too exciting for me."

"We'll try to get to the bottom of it, but I don't think it will do any good."

"They told their story to Major Brooks, but could not of course recount their suspicions of a brother officer in such a connection. He blamed them for staying out so long and said that there were many *budmashes* in the neighbourhood. Doctor White bound up Frank's arm and promised that it would heal within the week, and the boys quietly did their best to find out what Carruthers and Guman Rawat had been doing that day.

They discovered, however, that the officer had been on duty and that the servant had been seen by several persons during the afternoon and evening—at the time the attack was made and for some hours previously. It was true that he was not in the camp for a good part of the morning, but that was no uncommon event. In short, their efforts to turn their suspicions into proof were baffled, and they might have come to the conclusion that their enemy was in this case guiltless of the offence, but for one thing they had noticed. Carruthers was one of the first persons they saw on entering their quarters, and his look of disappointment on observing them return in safety, mingled with apprehension lest they should have found him out, convinced them that he had been interested in

their movements. However, he quickly appeared indifferent, and quietly asked if they had had good sport.

The regiments serving under General Gillespie were now preparing to advance, and 3,500 men shortly marched from Saharanpur into the territory occupied by the Gurkhas.

These provinces had been ceded to the East India Company by the Mohammedan conquerors, but the Gurkhas claimed the land by right of conquest. The climate is good and healthy, the country very beautiful; the hills are fertile and well-wooded, and were then a hunter's paradise. Beyond the lower slopes tower the mighty snow giants of the Himalayas, a most wonderful panorama.

The British objective was Jytak, a strong fortress guarding the pass that led to Nepal, but the British soon found their progress blocked by the smaller defence works of Kalunga, situated on the summit of a steep hill whose sides were covered with jungle.

Officers and men were all under the delusion that their progress would be simple and that little opposition would be attempted against so large a force as theirs. To their manifest surprise, therefore, they found that the enemy had not the slightest intention either of surrendering or of retiring. Kalunga was an old-world but strongly built stone fortress, protected by stockades guarding the approaches, and garrisoned by a mere handful of regular troops, six hundred men of the Purana Gorakh regiment, drawn from the Magar tribe of Gurkhas, under the

command of Colonel Balbhadar Sing, a man of heroic pluck and determination.

A close inspection of the defences assured Sir Robert that Balbhadar Sing had no thought of retreat, but meant to do his best to prevent the fortress entrusted to his care from falling into the hands of the British.

Believing, however, that the Gurkhas' confidence in themselves must be due to ignorance of the strength of his force and of the numbers under his command, and that if they knew how powerful his army was they would no longer dream of resistance, General Gillespie despatched a letter to the commandant of Kalunga, assuring him that, brave as the Gurkhas were, they could not hope to hold out against such overwhelming odds, and promising him and his men their lives and good treatment, as well as liberty as soon as peace should be concluded. The messenger set out at night and was safely conducted past the stockades to the gates of the fortress, where he found the commandant reposing. Balbhadar read the letter and gave a haughty verbal message to the effect that he was not in the habit of conducting correspondence at so unseemly an hour of the night, but promised that he would visit the British camp in person with his men behind him, and that would be his reply.

The British laughed at his defiant answer and admired his pluck, and next day the order was given that the stronghold must be carried by storm. English and Irishmen, Mohammedans and Hindus prepared for the attack. Little time was lost in

preparation, though,—the plan of attack being soon confided to the commanding officers of the four columns into which Gillespie divided his force.

"Impress on the minds of the soldiers," so ran the General's order, "the advantage to be gained by the use of the bayonet." Strict silence was to be enjoined, all orders were to be repeated in whispers, and as each column arrived in its place a halt was to be made in order to gain breath.

"The enemy we have to encounter," said Gillespie in his Orders for Attack, "are dexterous in using the short sword. Officers, caution your soldiers to keep them at the point of the bayonet; in the storm beware of their closing. Officers commanding columns are requested to set their watches with the Major-General's. *Parole*, 'Moira'; *Countersign*, 'Forward.' October 30th, 1814."

The four columns set out at night, and three that had to make a detour over very rugged ground, were too far away when Gillespie caused the signal-gun to be fired at 8 a.m. The arrangement was that all four columns should commence the attack from different sides two hours after the firing of the signal.

The battery of six-pounders played on the fortress, and without waiting for the other columns, Gillespie's force rushed confidently to the attack. They never dreamt of failure, for was not the experience of the British in India an almost unbroken record of success, even when the odds were all against them? Now that numbers were for once greatly in their favour, who could doubt the result?

Certainly not Ensigns Russell and Dorricot, who were firmly convinced that the Union Jack would soon be floating in triumph over the old-fashioned fortress, and each determined to be one of the foremost, if not the very first inside. But this was the first occasion on which our troops had striven against the Nepalese in mortal combat, and they had not reckoned on the valour of the little Tartar-visaged men, who indeed found in their British antagonists foemen worthy of their steel, but who were more than a match for the native soldiers, trained and gallant fighters though the sepoys had over and over again proved themselves to be.

A sortie by the garrison was repulsed after sharp fighting, of which Jack's company and the dismounted Irish dragoons took their share, and forcing their way past the stockades, our fellows advanced steadily to the foot of the walls, intending to carry the place by escalade. But the fire from Kalunga fort was terrible, bullets and arrows rained down upon them, the defenders never losing their nerve, never dreaming of wavering. The ladders were knocked down, the sepoys began to press back and, seeing these waver, the Gurkhas charged them with the *kukri* and completed the disorder.

From behind stockades and *sangars* (stone shelters) that were scattered on the hillside, the plucky Highlanders of Nepal dealt out death until the sepoys were cowed and the British disheartened. Springing in front of his troops, the brave Gillespie waved his sword and called upon the men for a further effort, when a bullet found its way to his heart and he

dropped. His *aide-de-camp* and other leading officers fell by his side, our friend Jack luckily escaping untouched, whilst Frank Dorricot received a slight flesh wound from an arrow.

Twenty officers and nearly two hundred men had been killed or wounded; the fall of their leaders had discouraged their followers, and seeing that the ranks wavered, the Gurkhas rushed in with their short and murderous kukri knives. First the black regiments and then the white hesitated; the retreat was ordered, and with heavy hearts and wounded pride, the British force fell back to wait for heavier cannon. The small guns that the force possessed could do little against the thick stone walls of Kalunga.

The Gurkhas were highly elated by the success of their handful against the renowned British troops; the latter were proportionately disheartened, and the loss of the gallant but rather rash Gillespie was keenly felt, particularly by his admiring Royal Irish dragoons.

One anecdote may be told here concerning the charger of the dead general. This horse, known among the Irish Dragoons as "Black Bob," was of rare beauty. Some weeks after Gillespie's death, Black Bob was put up for sale and the men of the corps determined to buy him as a regimental pet. Some officers of another dragoon regiment raised the price to three hundred guineas, but rather than lose their favourite the Royal Irish subscribed every farthing they possessed, and secured him. For some years Bob lived to march with empty saddle at the head of the regiment, wherever the gallant corps might be stationed.

CHAPTER VI

THE GLORIOUS DEFENCE OF KALUNGA

COLONEL MAWBEY, the senior officer of the force, considered the storming of Kalunga impracticable until a breach had been made in the walls. As he had no cannon heavy enough to effect this, he withdrew the army from before the fort and waited until a battery-train could be sent them from Delhi.

Philip Carruthers and Guman Rawat had given our ensigns no fresh cause for anxiety lately, and the boys' apprehensions began to be lulled, though Frank Dorricot, the more suspicious of the two, kept his eye upon both of them.

"Don't be a fool, Jack," he remarked one day when they were discussing the matter, whilst lying inactive in the Dehra Dun, waiting for the reinforcements. "He's not lost interest in us yet, you may be sure. Probably he's come to the conclusion that murder is a dangerous game to play, and he's crafty enough to invent some scheme that will be safer for himself. And he's Asiatic enough to be able to bide his time."

"Um!" Jack replied. "Perhaps we've made a mountain of a molehill. He's a brute sure enough, but what we consider to have been attempts at murder may have been nothing more than coinci-

dences after all. When we look back and think of the evidence against him, it's very slight after all. Perhaps we've wronged him."

"There's many a man been hanged on less evidence, so don't make the mistake of feeling secure. You are too easy-going, old man."

As soon as the big guns arrived the army once more advanced against Kalunga, and three days later the battery of grim eighteen-pounders opened fire, and soon knocked a hole in the walls. A storming party, consisting of the grenadier companies of the various regiments British and Native, supported by the greater portion of the force, was sent to rush the breach. Unfortunately, the order was issued that muskets were not to be loaded, and that the stormers must trust to the bayonet alone. This command was given because the main hope of success lay in a determined rush for the breach without stopping to fire and to re-load. With the old Brown Bess musket this occupation wasted a good deal of time, and the Gurkhas being under cover of the stockades would have the advantage, whereas a determined bayonet charge, forcing all obstacles, had been found, practically without exception, to shake the nerve of Asiatic warriors.

But the Gurkhas do not allow their nerves to be shaken easily, and in this case the order was a mistaken one.

The storming party carried the stockades, forcing their way through after hard fighting by dint of numbers, and arrived before the breach. Here they found, to their dismay, that the entrance merely led

to a steep descent into the fort, at the bottom of which the determined Nepalese awaited them with muskets, spears and arrows, whilst another body of the defenders appeared on the walls above and began to fire into them and hurl down upon their heads showers of heavy stones that had been collected in piles along the walls. Had their muskets been loaded, our fellows might have replied with considerable effect, particularly upon the party below them. But they were in a trap and there was no time to load.

The sepoy companies, though composed of men who had proved themselves very courageous and dashing in former wars, began to give way and run back. They believed the terrible mountaineers to be demons incarnate. The British soldiers were forced back by their brown comrades, who outnumbered them. The officers managed to halt them and restore some order when at a little distance from the fortress walls and lower down the hillside, but though they exhorted their men to re-form and charge once more, the arrows and bullets were falling too quickly amongst them, and the huge stones that came tumbling down the rocks, knocked them over like ninepins.

The sepoys had lost their nerve; the white soldiers were sullen at the thought of their defeat and heavy loss, and there was nothing for it but to retire. No sooner, however, did they commence to retrace their steps than the stout little defenders, who had shown such wonderful courage and military skill, left their shelter and charged and re-charged the retiring masses, using their broad-bladed kukris with fearful effect.

John Collingwood Russell and Frank Dorricot were with other unhappy, sullen-tempered British officers in the rear, the nearest to the triumphant foe. They were sick at heart and hardly cared at the time what might happen to them, so deadening was the sense of defeat and failure. A subaltern of the 53rd and a captain of the 6th Native Infantry were killed by their side, and Lieutenant Knowles, an officer of whom Jack was very fond, was struck down by a kukri a moment later. The two ensigns, seeing that he was only wounded, were making an attempt to carry him off when a couple of Gurkhas rushed upon them. Never before had Jack Russell fought for his life hand to hand in single combat, and for a moment the boy's heart almost failed him so fierce was his little assailant. Quickly recovering, he turned upon his adversary. The Gurkha darted in a slicing blow that Jack managed to parry and to follow up by a thrust that wounded his foeman in the sword-arm. Hastily transferring the weapon to his left hand, the Gurkha made for the lad, but evidently he was not so skilful as most of his countrymen, for this time Jack ran him through the breast.

Turning round, he perceived his chum still engaged with the second Gurkha. He darted to the rescue and struck the man down just in time to save Frank's life. By this time a number of the 162nd had become aware of what was taking place, and seeing that their beloved lieutenant was in danger, they charged back upon the mob of Gurkhas who were now rushing to cut the ensigns off. There was no

resisting the fury of that charge. The defeat rankling in their minds had made the men savage; Russell and Dorricot were both favourites in the regiment, and for Knowles they were all ready to give their lives. The Gurkhas were hurled back, the wounded men carried off in triumph; and the party rejoined their comrades.

In this disastrous assault no less than 670 of the British force were killed and wounded—that is, a number exceeding the whole Nepalese garrison. Ensign Russell had not escaped unhurt, for just as the enemy retired from the chase, an arrow inflicted a slight wound in his arm. But little he recked, for had he not been noticed by Major Brooks and complimented on his courage?

The major's approval left John Collingwood Russell radiantly happy, save for the smarting of defeat, which rankled more than the wound. He was delighted to find that the injury to Lieutenant Knowles was not very serious and was not likely to incapacitate him for long.

At length wiser and more cautious counsels prevailed; these attempts to take Kalunga by storm were given up, and the big guns commenced a bombardment that continued for three days. By that time the place was in ruins. Balbhadar, the Commandant, escaped with seventy survivors, and the bodies of the remaining 530 heroes of the Purana Gorakh regiment strewed the ground. The desperate resistance that had been made was only too plain, and our two ensigns, standing amidst the ruins, began to wonder why all these brave men on both sides had

lost their lives in a quarrel of which they knew neither the right nor the wrong.

"What grand little beggars these are!" exclaimed Dorricot, "I should like to command a few of them."

"So should I," Jack responded. "I'd no idea that 'niggers' could fight like this. Wouldn't they make good soldiers if properly drilled and armed?"

"They make pretty good ones as they are, I should say," Frank declared. "I should think that this would rank as one of the grandest defences in history."

They little thought that ere long their wish to command these plucky little highlanders would be fulfilled.

"Who are these Gurkhas, Doctor?" Jack asked of the surgeon who was attending to one or two of their injured foemen who still lived. The boys had been helping him by bringing water for these men. "Are they Tartars or Chinese, Mohammedan or Brahmin or Buddhist?"

"Their history is not fully known," Doctor White replied, "but I believe they are descended from Rajputs of the Hill States who conquered Nepal many hundreds of years ago. Brahminism is their official religion, but in actual fact a large number prefer a mixture of that creed and debased Buddhism. Their ancestors, the Brahminical Rajputs, married the sturdy mountain women of Mongolian descent, who were Buddhists of a sort, and the Gurkhas have inherited the military virtues of both races. The Gurkha throws on one side all religious forms and caste prejudices that are a hindrance to the

military profession. He really worships his kukri as devoutly as anything."

"What kind of character have they?" Frank enquired—"they are pretty savage, but are they treacherous?"

"No,—that is to say the real Magar and Gurung Gurkhas are not, though they say that their rulers often are, and that the court of the King of Nepal is a very wicked place. But the Magar and Gurung class that form the backbone of the Gurkha army—and these poor fellows lying here are all Magars—have a reputation for honesty, loyalty and good-faith uncommon amongst Asiatics. And though in all previous Asiatic wars we have found nobles and even princes anxious to sell their countrymen for money or land, it is a fact that not a single Gurkha has proved false to his nation."

"That's good. They're worth fighting against."

"Another very curious fact is, that though very ferocious when fighting, and though when the Gurkhas made themselves the supreme power in Nepal about fifty years ago they behaved as cruelly as any other Eastern conquerors, yet now that they have settled down they do not oppress their subject races, but are perhaps the best masters in Asia. They themselves are all of the military caste, yet they allow perfect freedom to the Newars, Sunwars, Khambus, Lepchas and other tribes they have conquered, and who are the husbandmen, merchants, artizans and labourers of Nepal. Other conquerors, Mogul or Hindu, Pathan or Persian, have always ground down their subjects and extorted exorbitant taxes from them."

"They're not a bad lot then, taking them all round," Jack commented.

"Not at all, though they have their failings. For instance, the town of Kirtipur is still known as the 'the town of cut-noses' on account of the Gurkha barbarity during the conquest of Nepal. But they have many good points that other barbarous races lack."

CHAPTER VII

A MYSTERIOUS CRY IN THE JUNGLE

"WHICH of you was first?" asked Major Brooks, proud that so many of his youngsters had shown such spirit.

"I was, sir," Jack Russell asserted.

"No, that you weren't," contradicted Frank. "Let us both go, sir; then if one gets killed, the other may escape and give the letter."

Communication with General Martindell had become necessary, for though Kalunga had fallen, the army had again been blocked by the fort of Jytak, garrisoned by Ranjur Thapa, son of the Gurkha commander-in-chief, and the British leaders having now been taught what an intrepid enemy was opposed to them, their impetuosity had given way to caution. As the messenger would have to run the gauntlet of the alert Gurkha scouts, the post was one of great danger. Junior officers of the 162nd had been asked to volunteer, and before the Major had ended his appeal, Ensigns Jack Russell and Frank Dorricot had stepped forward, others following barely half a second behind.

The major looked at the two chums, at their well-knit athletic frames and sparkling eyes, and

remained silent. At length he spoke: "You shall both go. Besides this letter from Colonel Mawbey I shall give you a message, so that if you are likely to be caught the letter must be destroyed, and should you escape you will be able to deliver the message. Understand that if the enemy should read the letter and know our plans, all might be lost. But I think I can trust you both."

Major Brooks then gave them directions and tried to explain the best route to take.

"There will be no path for the first part of the way," he said, "and you'll have to pass through some bad ground, hillside and jungle, until you hit on a road by Jahi Tal."

"I remember that, sir," interrupted Frank; "we passed there last week and halted for the night, didn't we, sir?"

"That's the place! When you are there you'll be all right; there's no longer any danger, and the route will be the same we passed over on the way here. But understand that you must not join the road before Jahi Tal; you'll have to cut through the woods at first, because the road will be watched. It will not be easy to find."

"I'll show them before they start, if it's a clear night," remarked Doctor White, and a few hours later the doctor gave them precise directions.

"Now I hear that you are both good walkers and used to finding your way about country and moors where there are no paths. You should reach Jahi Tal in about five hours, and come up with General Martindell to-morrow night, if you *are* first-

rate walkers and no accidents happen. Don't go and get shot by his sentries, though."

The boys grinned at the idea, and their friend the surgeon resumed: "Now this is the direction you must take for Jahi Tal. Do you see that very bright star to the south-east—the brightest star in the sky? You can't miss it."

"Yes, sir."

"That's Sirius, the dog-star. Do you see that big irregular, oblong constellation to the right of Sirius, with a very bright star at the top left-hand and another at the bottom right-hand corner and fairly big stars at the other corners, and three bright ones diagonally across the centre? That's Orion, the hunter; the three stars form his belt, and Sirius is his dog. Now do you see a big yellow star to the right of Orion? Draw a line from Sirius through the belt and on to the right and you'll nearly hit it."

"Yes, sir, I see it," Frank affirmed.

"Well, that's Aldebaran, the chief star in the constellation Taurus. Now for the first hour and a half keep straight for Aldebaran. For the next hour and a half make for half-way between him and Orion, and for the remainder go straight for Orion and you are certain to hit the road not far from Jahi Tal. You see the stars are moving to the right, and the direction would not be the same if you always kept one in view, unless it was the North star, and then you would have to keep glancing behind you over your left shoulder, and that would be rather awkward, wouldn't it?"

"Thank you, sir; I think we'll manage all right," said Ensign Russell.

The elated lads, well-provisioned with sandwiches and biscuit, received the letter and message, shook hands with one or two of their comrades, and set out on their way rapidly, but with great caution, making use of every bit of shade and cover. For the first mile or two the route lay over a high ridge of coarse, rank grass, dotted here and there with rocky masses of sandstone and limestone, almost bare of trees and vegetation; but after this they passed into a belt of forest and jungle land, in which it was necessary to be very much on the alert, for tigers and leopards were not unknown hereabouts. Both lads had been provided with muskets and pistols as a protection against wild beasts, and they thoroughly enjoyed the new experience. Unfortunately, Fennimore Cooper's fascinating stories had not yet been written, or the boys would have imagined themselves heroes of his tales of adventure, and Frank would assuredly have been named "The Pathfinder."

The night was not dark; and they glanced anxiously around from time to time as stealthy movements in the underwood on either side were heard, or a rustling in the branches above would cause them to close together and anxiously finger the triggers of their firearms, until they realised that the hosts of monkeys had been disturbed by their footfall, and that no danger threatened. Through the trees they caught occasional glimpses, first, of Sirius, and then of Aldebaran, and knew that the direction

was right. The mysterious noises always to be heard at night in a forest, now afar off and now close at hand, caused them more than once to start apprehensively, and from time to time the distant, long-drawn howl of a wolf brought a shudder that could not be repressed, though they knew that there was small probability of an attack from Indian wolves.

Suddenly Frank touched his comrade on the arm and stopped. "What's that?"

He pointed in the direction of some tangled undergrowth to their right. Following his glance, Jack perceived something that filled him with horror. A cold thrill passed down each boy's spine. Both had shown good, sturdy, British pluck at the siege of Kalunga, but this was different—this was no human foe. For a moment they were panic-stricken, and would have run for their lives had not blind terror kept them rooted to the spot. In the undergrowth, less than thirty paces distant, a pair of luminous beryl-green orbs, apparently suspended about eighteen inches from the ground, filled their hearts with a nameless dread. The shock at first completely unmanned them, but their presence of mind soon reasserted itself and they recognised that this was no supernatural visitor, no demon of the woods, but, hardly less terrible, the blazing eyes of some wild beast that glared malignantly upon them. Nothing more could be seen. Above and around them, a great clump of dark pines quite shut out the feeble light of the new moon and of the stars. Our ensigns' hearts beat wildly as they levelled their guns towards the spot.

"Don't shoot," whispered Jack hastily, his nerves quickly getting under control. "It's a tiger; let's get nearer and try to frighten him. You know we mustn't fire and give the alarm, unless it's to save our lives."

"A tiger?" replied Frank in feverish excitement. "Oh, we must kill him! Nobody will hear us; there's not a person within miles."

They drew nearer, and the malevolent green eyes seemed to edge farther away.

"It's a leopard," whispered Jack. "You mustn't fire; we can frighten him."

Uttering an appalling but not very loud hiss, the ensign pluckily rushed a few paces nearer to the handsome beast, stamping and waving his gun, whilst Frank kept his musket to the shoulder to protect his chum. But the leopard had no intention of attacking two armed men, and turned slowly away. Cautiously the lads proceeded, keeping their eyes well open, and blessing the small sickle of a new moon that shed just enough light around to prevent the beast from taking them unawares. Fortunate indeed was it that the night was not quite dark and that the bushes, grasses, and creepers had not yet attained their spring thickness of growth and depth of foliage, for before long they found that the leopard, instead of having disappeared as they had hoped, was keeping pace with them some thirty or forty yards to the right, evidently awaiting its opportunity. Now and again they could see it emerge from the bushes, and their hearts beat wildly.

"Kill the brute," whispered Frank; "we can't keep on like this."

At that moment their stalker turned round quickly in a startled manner, stopped dead for a second, and then rapidly and quietly began to slink away, soon disappearing in some denser jungle.

"I wonder what that was for," was Jack's astonished comment.

"Oh, he's thought better of it," Frank replied.

"I don't know about that; it's a rather queer affair. I think he was frightened at something."

A blood-curdling, squealing yell, partly of impotent rage, but more of frightful pain, broke the stillness; then all was quiet. The boys stopped and looked at one another, panting; truly they were having more excitement than they had bargained for.

"Jack, what was that?—it was not human."

"Shall—shall we go and see? Perhaps some one needs our help."

"No, let us get on to our business; that was no cry for help. Let's get clear of this place," and the lads quickened their pace, the horrible cry still echoing in their ears.

Before long they began to leave the jungle behind them, their way leading up a hillside covered with small pines and deodars and dense bushes of wild barberry.

"Look there!" whispered Jack, with awe in his voice; "what are those?"

His comrade stopped, trembling slightly, for the leopard and that fearful cry had got on their nerves.

Fifty yards away, three tall ghostly figures stretched out their arms with threatening gesture.

"Why, Jack, they're only cactus plants," laughed Frank at length. "Say, old man, we're both in a good deal of a funk. We must try to get our nerve again."

"Why, so they are; and look, there are more of them up there. You are right; we *have* been scared and no mistake."

And indeed the great cactus on these lower slopes of the Himalayas has a most ghostly appearance in the dim light, and the ensigns had no need to be ashamed of their fright. Feeling somewhat relieved that one of their apprehensions had proved so groundless, they merrily resumed their journey, still keeping the bright light of Sirius well in view. Jahi Tal could not be more than an hour's walk away, for, except when stalked by the leopard, they had gone at a swinging pace. No danger now seemed to threaten, and they began to enjoy the adventure once more.

"This is better than sitting round the camp fire," observed Jack.

"Rather! I could—"

"Halt!"

The boys stopped short in amazement; no one was in sight. Suddenly, from the ground fifty yards in front, rose up half a dozen squat forms, holding matchlocks and bows and arrows pointed at the boys' breasts. Like a shot, the two whipped to the ground behind the thick barberry bushes that stretched some distance on either side. At that moment some clouds

passed over the moon dimming its already feeble light. Quick as thought, Jack, levelling his musket, called in mongrel Hindustani, "Stay where you are, or we shoot;" then handing the letter to his companion, he rapidly whispered, "Creep along those bushes to the right while I keep 'em talking here."

"Do you think I'm going to leave you to be killed by these savage beasts? I'll be shot if I do," was the indignant reply.

"You'll be shot if you don't, you ass! That letter has got to be delivered, and you're the best runner and best hill-man."

"I don't care, Jack. How can I leave you here to be killed? You go with the letter and I'll stop."

"Don't waste time. I'm senior officer and I order you to go. The danger's just as great for you. Do you hear? Go!"

Frank perceived that his chum was in deadly earnest, and that duty bade him go, though desire whispered him to stay. He decided in the right way, though he alone knew how he loathed the idea of abandoning his comrade.

"Well, good-bye, old fellow," and Ensign Dorricot quietly crept away between the barberry bushes whilst Russell continued to parley with the foe.

"Come out, you Englishmen," commanded the Gurkha officer in Hindustani not much better than Jack's. "Come out, and we won't kill you." This officer was a small thick-set fellow, very strongly built.

"You stay where you are," retorted the ensign scornfully, "or we *will* kill you."

"You cannot escape; we're six to two, and we do not wish to kill brave men."

By this time Frank was a hundred yards away, still on all fours, or, for a change, crawling serpent-wise along the ground where the cover was low. Jack kept his gun levelled at the officer's head, noticing with admiration that the Gurkha never flinched, but calmly gazed along the barrel. Then he slowly drawled: "What are you going to do if we come out?"

"I want to know what you are doing here," the little highlander replied. "You carry a message, and I must know what that message is."

Our hero remained thoughtful for a few moments whilst he pictured his chum dragging his limbs still another yard towards safety as he measured each second's delay.

"But who are you? Think you that we shall give the letter to the first that asks?"

The young Gurkha haughtily drew himself up to his full height of five feet two inches. "I am Jaspao Thapa, son of the great Amar Sing."

Now all the English soldiers had heard of the brave old lion, General Amar Sing Thapa, commandant of the Gurkha forces, and of his son Ranjur, who was defending Jytak fort so pluckily against them.

"Is that true?" said the ensign slowly. "We are indeed fortunate to have fallen into the hands of so distinguished a soldier. But I cannot give you any letter; there is no letter here."

"Come out at once or we slay you both," was

the quiet reply, and Jack recognised the tone of one who meant what he said.

"Grant us a moment for consultation," he requested, and pretended to confer with his companion.

"That's enough," ordered the officer at length; "come out." Ensign Russell slowly emerged from the bushes.

"Come out, you other Englishman," shouted Jaspao, but no one stirred.

"Where is your comrade?" he demanded.

Jack pretended to be eagerly watching some one to the left, and called out in Hindustani. "Come back, Frank; they'll shoot you."

Quick as thought, three Gurkhas rushed off in the direction towards which he had called, and, happy to have put them on the wrong track, the ensign surrendered to the others. For half an hour they waited there until the three came back—without a prisoner. The *subadar** was angry.

"Tell me your message," he threatened. "I know well that you have one, for we have watched for you and followed you from the English camp. We might have killed you long ago, but we had our reasons for capturing you here. Your comrade has escaped, but you shall not escape."

Jack had been too anxious for his comrade's safety to think seriously of his own danger, but now he feared that his life would answer for this ruse and he began to envy his chum.

"I cannot tell you," he replied.

* *Subadar* is the Hindu equivalent of "captain."

The Gurkhas searched him, but found no letter.

"Unless you tell me your errand you die," cried Jaspao Thapa.

"Englishmen do not betray their country," was the steadfast reply.

"Oh, that shall we see! Tie the prisoner to this tree."

CHAPTER VIII

DISHONOUR OR DEATH

THE order was promptly obeyed; Jack was bound to the trunk of the nearest deodar, and three soldiers were drawn up in line, their guns at the "Present."

"Unless you speak at once, I give the order to fire," he was told in solemn determined tones. It cannot be denied that the lad was afraid, terribly afraid, but in spite of his longing to live, never for a moment did he waver in his purpose. The courage of men who know not fear, cannot be ranked so high as that of the man who dreads the danger, yet resolutely faces it.

"Then tell them to fire quickly," he gave answer, and tried to appear as though he scorned death. The young Gurkha looked him between the eyes, and Jack's glance never quailed before the ferocious expression. Then Jaspao strode towards him, and, drawing with savage gesture his half-moon-shaped kukri, raised his arm to strike. Still the ensign's eyes never winced. He drew himself up stiffly and tried to look unconcerned.

The kukri swiftly descended, and with one clean stroke the Gurkha severed the bonds.

"Put your guns down," he ordered. "You brave lad, I would not have you killed. Had you betrayed

your army, then should you have been shot, but we Gurkhas admire courage and loyalty even in an enemy. You are my prisoner, and must come before my brother, Ranjur Thapa at Jytak."

The English boy, dazed by the unexpected turn of events, could not speak. The subadar gave orders for his men to spread themselves round the country side to capture the fugitive, and then asked Jack to promise not to attempt escape. The parole was willingly given, for he felt this much due to so chivalrous and trusting a foeman, and prisoner and captor set out for Jytak fort, taking a circuitous route in order to reach their goal from the northern side and so avoid all chance of encounter with the British. Jack, whose musket and pistol had been returned by his generous adversary, already felt himself on a perfectly friendly footing with the Gurkha subadar, who was but a few years older than himself. They walked side by side over hill, through scrub, and down steep ravines and picturesque gorges, in one of which they sat down for a short rest. The English lad drew out his packet of sandwiches and asked his companion to share with him. This, however, the subadar would not do until assured that the meat was mutton and not beef.

"Wait a few moments," said the Gurkha. "You collect some dry twigs for a fire, and we'll have something good to eat."

Without waiting for a reply the little man proceeded down the stream to a quiet pool, where he lay for some time on his stomach. The boy watched him for a moment and then did as he was told, soon

returning with a quantity of dry wood. Before many minutes had passed Jaspao returned with a couple of fine fish not unlike our speckled trout, and taking flint and steel from his kukri-sheath and rubbing them together, quickly had a fire alight.

The fish, eaten with Jack's bread and biscuit, proved delicious. The fire also was very welcome, for after midnight the ensign found the air on these hills very different from the temperature experienced at Gorakabad. Another fire was quickly blazing, and stretching themselves between the two as a protection against wild beasts, both were soon fast asleep.

Just before dawn Jack was awakened from his troubled dreams by his swarthy companion.

"We must be up now, sahib," said he. "We still have a great distance to cover."

They crossed the stream and made their way up the opposite side of the ravine, and before long struck a small little-used pathway that zigzagged over a desolate hillside, and led them to a mighty ravine, through which flowed a mountain torrent that was quite unfordable. Over the river a *jula* or rope bridge was slung, resembling in appearance a long frail ladder laid across the ravine. Jack was by no means delighted when he found that the Gurkha proposed to cross by this. Two long ropes of twisted grass were stretched across, and these were connected at intervals of about twelve inches by short strips of bamboo, and two other ropes were intended for hand supports. The fragile bridge swayed in the wind, and as the ensign looked down on the rustling tops of the pines a hundred feet

below, and heard the roar of the torrent dashing over its rocky bed, still deeper down, his heart failed him.

"Is this the only way across?" he asked.

"Surely, sahib, there is no other. Take off your boots, otherwise you may slip."

Jaspao proceeded to divest himself of his rough but serviceable square-toed Gurkha shoes, and Jack followed his example. The subadar then crossed the *jula* cautiously, but with every appearance of ease, the frail ropes swinging and swaying and bulging downward as he passed along. Jack, determined not to be outdone by any Gurkha, plucked up spirit to follow as soon as his companion had reached *terra firma.* Whistling blithely, he stepped on to the first rung, holding anxiously by the hand ropes. After about twenty paces, during which he swayed and tottered and trembled as the bridge moved with each footstep, he chanced to look down into the foaming, swirling waters below, and turned sick and giddy at once. For a few seconds he was unable to move, but hung on helplessly, until he saw Jaspao retracing his steps to assist him. This braced him up.

"No," he thought. "If he can do it, an Englishman ought to; I'll not be helped by him."

With that his native pluck returned: motioning Jaspao back, he continued his crossing and quickly reached the other side.

"Plenty of people have been killed there," remarked the Gurkha, cheerfully nodding back at the bridge they had left.

Half an hour later they came to more forest land. Passing through a strip of dense jungle, Jaspao quietly dropped on one knee and brought his musket, to the shoulder. Jack instinctively did the same, though he could not perceive anything to account for this attitude. He looked along the Gurkha's barrel, but in vain, there was nothing to be seen save the coarse jungle-grass. They remained motionless for some time—it seemed hours to the boy who was in a state of wild excitement, for adventures were without end this night—when Jaspao pulled the trigger and a magnificent tiger sprang into the air with a roar, then rolled over, dead. The bullet had penetrated its brain. Hurriedly reloading for fear that the tiger's mate might be close at hand, the *shikarri* whipped out his beloved kukri and skilfully stripped the great beast of his striped robe. The onlooker could see that this was neither the first nor the second tiger that Jaspao Thapa had slain, and he was filled with admiration for the coolness and marksmanship of his new acquaintance.

"Why are you laughing?" the little Mongolian suddenly asked.

"I was just thinking," Jack replied, "how queer all this is. Yesterday we two were ready to kill one another, and now we are chums."

"It is true, Englishman. Good friends we are, and never have I met a man I like so well."

"Why cannot our Governor-General and your maharaja meet like this," Jack said, "and settle the quarrel without fighting?"

"Nay, that would be a pity," Jaspao gravely answered, "for we Gurkhas love a good fight."

* * *

With slower steps they resumed their journey, carrying the trophy between them, though the sturdy Jaspao, whose back and legs were almost as strong as those of a horse, bore by far the greater part of the burden. The curiously-matched pair had now arrived by their circuitous route within a few miles of Jytak fort. Jack was very hungry, and the weight of the skin was great. He was therefore glad when Jaspao stopped.

"Sahib," he suggested, pointing towards a little ravine a quarter of a mile away, that marked the course of a tiny stream with delightful cascades and deep pools—"Sahib, you stay here and rest, and I will try to catch some more fish, for I do not wish to fire at the birds lest the British should hear the noise. When we have eaten we will hide the tiger-skin in the fork of that tree, and when we come to the fort I will send my men for it. I know that you will not try to escape, being an Englishman."

Jack willingly agreed to the suggestion, and as Jaspao set off he began to search for some dry wood with which to kindle a fire against the *subadar's* return. The ensign already found himself entertaining sentiments of comradeship and even of affection towards his queer, though frank and courageous captor, and while exceedingly disgusted that he had allowed himself to be entrapped, he felt little resentment towards the Gurkhas.

Having gathered sufficient fuel, the boy lay down beside the tiger-skin under the shade of a huge rhododendron. There was no sign of his captor, so Jack fell to wondering how he would be treated on their arrival within the fort, and the temptation to break his parole and disappear amongst the undergrowth was strong, yet not strong enough to ruin the lad's honour.

"In all probability," he reflected, "this Ranjur Thapa will not prove so good-natured as his brother Jaspao, still I think the little man will speak up for me and see that I'm not so badly treated. He's a jolly little beggar, and I think he likes me. But I wonder how he got to know that Frank and I were taking that message? Could it be possible that—"

He stopped short. Surely that was a twig cracking, as though something had stepped upon it! Aware that the jungle was the haunt of many wild beasts he had kept eyes and ears open. The boy rose to his knees and looked around, but there was no sign of any enemy, human or bestial.

He sat down again and pretended to doze. He was in no mood for contemplation now, and he kept a sharp look-out between the twigs and decaying leaves of the rhododendron. His watchfulness was presently rewarded.

Creeping slowly and cautiously towards him, wriggling snake-like through the rank grass and vegetation, and, wherever possible, keeping some bush or tree-trunk between their quarry and themselves, Jack perceived four men, clad in peasant's dress and not, like Jaspao's men, in the Gurkha uniform

that had been adopted in imitation of the Company's sepoys. This costume consisted of a roll of cloth round the waist and loins, a tightly-fitting waistcoat buttoned up to the throat, and a *khadi* or kind of blanket folded over the back and chest, leaving the arms free for work or for fighting. A round black cap was tilted on one side of the head, and square-toed brown shoes, fastened by leather strips wound round the ankle and reaching half way to the knee, completed the dress. One carried a musket, the remainder had bows and arrows in addition to their kukhris.

Our ensign was scared, and he was at a loss what to do next. There was just a chance that by very quick loading and careful aim, and by getting in his first shot at once, before they became aware that they were seen, he might hold out against the four, for the rhododendron would afford him good shelter against arrows. If he should be able to dispose of two before they could come to close quarters, he might manage to fight the other two with his sword. A great desire took hold of him. The British camp was not many miles away and there might be a patrol within musket-shot. Surely he was justified in firing in self-defence, and if the report should be heard he might be rescued.

But in time he remembered his situation. He was a prisoner on parole; the sword and musket he carried by permission of his trusting captor who had confidence in him. He could not honourably fight, yet he perceived that his position would be a difficult one to explain to the four hunters unless Jaspao

quickly returned. And indeed it was not in the least likely that they would give him time to explain; they would probably shoot on sight. They had seen him searching for firewood and had stalked him.

After a few seconds' deliberation he resolved to advance towards them and demonstrate his peaceable intentions. He therefore rose. As soon as the Gurkhas saw that they were discovered, two of them let fly, and the arrows whizzed unpleasantly close to the boy's head. He placed his musket on the ground, and holding his hands above his head, walked towards them. The strangers stepped forward to meet him, their arrows fitted to their bows, and the strings drawn to the full.

CHAPTER IX

"IT IS BETTER TO DIE THAN TO BE A COWARD."

JACK addressed them in Hindustani, but with one accord they shook their heads and the eldest replied in *Khas-Kura*, the commonest of the many Nepal dialects, not one word of which could the English boy make out. He pointed towards the stream in whose direction Jaspao had disappeared, entreating them to accompany him thither, and, pointing to their kukhris, endeavoured to explain that someone wearing a similar weapon—the mark of a Gurkha—was over yonder. But these proceedings only made them the more suspicious, for Gurkhas are not as a rule half so quick-witted as was his friend Jaspao. They guessed there must be Englishmen of his party in the direction towards which he pointed, and signed that he must hasten away with them.

They relieved the ensign of his sword and picked up the musket he had dropped. Perceiving the tiger-skin, they stared in amazement, whereupon Jack again pointed to the kukhris and touched the small skinning-knives attached to the sheath, but again they failed to grasp his meaning. Securing the skin, they ordered him by means of sign language to march in front of them at once. He dared

not shout for Jaspao, as they would have imagined that he meant to warn his fellow-countrymen.

The escort carried the trophy in turn by couples, whilst the others kept by the prisoner's side. Within an hour or two they passed the stockades that guarded the fort of Jytak, and presently our hero was ushered into the presence of the commandant, Ranjur Thapa, elder brother of the good-natured Jaspao.

The Gurkha general was richly dressed in a uniform somewhat similar to that worn by the principal native officers of the Bengal regiments, but lavishly adorned with gold and precious stones. A magnificent diamond aigrette, fixed to a gold badge, sparkled in his cap. Officers and soldiers gathered round and gazed curiously from the English boy to the tiger-skin, as Jack's second captors related in what manner they had found him, and their inability to account for the striped trophy. They suggested that a party of British soldiers must have been close at hand, and that the prisoner had evidently been left to guard the skin.

The Gurkhas are the keenest of *shikarris* (hunters) and are almost the only race in the world who will go out singly to stalk the tiger in his lair, armed with a flintlock and a kukri-knife. The fact that this white youth was likewise a *shikarri* made them less hostile towards him than they might have been, and they regarded the boy with approval as they made mental calculations respecting the tiger's size.

Ranjur Thapa addressed the prisoner, but the

general knew only a few words of *Urdu*, and, try as he would, Jack failed to extract any intelligible meaning therefrom. The elder brother was evidently not so accomplished as Jaspao, who could not only speak the chief tongue of Hindustan, but could read and write the same after a fashion,—an achievement uncommon amongst his clan. Eventually an officer of lower rank was pushed forward by his comrades to act as interpreter, but desire outran performance. He only made the mystery darker, for his Hindustani was a fearful and wonderful effort, and his reputation as a linguist vanished for ever. The Englishman was given food and blankets and was placed in a cell, guarded by two soldiers.

Ensign Russell had enjoyed very little repose during the last day or two, so he curled himself up on the hard and dirty mattress, wrapped the blankets round his body, and was soon fast asleep. As he lay in peaceful slumber, Jaspao returned to the fort in a very angry mood, for had he not lost both his prisoner and the tiger's pelt?

"Ugh!" said he to his brother, "we caught an English boy, an officer, and he gave me his word that he would not try to escape, so I spared his life. I was a fool to trust him, but I had heard that the word of an Englishman was sacred. I shall spare no more."

"But why didst thou let him leave thee?" asked Ranjur. "That was not like my brother Jaspao."

"He promised to remain and I trusted him. Besides my heart went out to the little Englishman, because he was without doubt a brave lad. So,

as we were hungry I left him in order to catch some fish, and when I returned the false Englishman had vanished; and to make matters worse, he has stolen the skin of a tiger I slew,—a good skin, and my twenty-eighth. How he carried it away I cannot tell, for he seemed to be tired."

"What!" exclaimed his brother, and the by-standers echoed the enquiry—"A tiger-skin and a boy officer? Ho! ho! Jaspao, thy English friend was not false to his promise. He was carried away by force."

The commandant conducted his brother to the cell, and the noise they made awakened our hero. Jaspao gave a cry of delight, and ran to embrace the lad.

"Oh, oh, my little comrade!" he cried, "how didst thou come here?"

Jack rubbed his eyes and yawned. For the last two hours he had been home in England and could not locate himself at once. He then related how he had been stalked and captured, and how he could not make the hunters understand. Jaspao interpreted for the benefit of his comrades.

"Some of these countrymen of mine have no more sense than a hog," he confidentially whispered to the prisoner. "I am glad thou wast true to thy word, for I like my English friend."

He told Jack how, on reaching the stream, he had come across the pugs of a leopard. The fish were promptly forgotten, and the sporting instinct made him oblivious of hunger and of everything else, and he had wandered far afield before recollecting his

errand. He returned with all haste to the spot and was forced to believe that his prisoner had seized the opportunity to escape.

As Jaspao Thapa had taken a great fancy to his captive, Ranjur allowed Jack to give his parole not to escape, and granted him better sleeping-quarters. Next morning he was again brought before the commandant and questioned concerning the numbers and disposition of the British forces. Half a dozen of the senior Gurkha officers were present.

"The young Englishman is your friend, Jaspao," Ranjur Thapa declared, "and his life shall be spared. But he must tell us what the British are doing, how many men, and how many guns, and how many are coming to reinforce them."

Jaspao translated his brother's commands, but Jack firmly asserted that he would tell nothing, whatever they might threaten.

"Thou art in our power," said the Gurkha general, "and thou must answer my questions if thou dost wish to save thy life."

Again Jaspao interpreted and Ranjur added:

"Perchance he thinks that because thou art his friend, my brother, he can treat my demands lightly. Let him know, therefore, that Ranjur Thapa can be harsh and stern when his duty bids him, and that even his brother's entreaties will have no effect."

"What would you do, *Sahib Bahadur*, if you were in my place?" the boy boldly asked the general. "Would you betray your country? Would you prefer to have the finger of scorn pointed at you by your comrades, as one who sold his country

to save his own life? You are a brave man, *Sahib Bahadur*, and the leader of brave men, and I know that you would rather die than be a coward."

This was perhaps the longest speech our hero had ever made, and he looked earnestly and in great anxiety at the ugly brown faces in front of him. To his joy he fancied he could see a pleased expression in the almond-shaped eyes as his friend translated.

"Good, good!" cried one or two of the officers as Jaspao concluded. "He speaks truth. *Kafar hunnu bhanda manru ramro.*"

By good luck the boy had hit upon one of the most treasured proverbs of the Gurkhas, a saying consistently acted up to. The meaning of the phrase used and repeated by the officers was—

"*It is better to die than to be a coward.*"

Jaspao entered into an argument with his brother, and Jack waited the decision in a state of excusable nervousness and apprehension. He saw or fancied that more than one of the council were taking Jaspao's part, and presently his chum announced:

"My friend, do not fear. My brother knows that any Gurkha who would be so base as to betray his clan, would never dare face his countrymen again. We are not *madhesias* from the plains nor Delhi Pathans who sell their honour. We see that Englishmen are also true to their race, and, though you are our enemies, we admire you. Thou must give thy word not to attempt escape, and thou shalt be treated as one of us."

Jack gladly gave the required parole. At this moment a haughty and apparently distinguished officer who had entered just as Jaspao concluded his argument with Ranjur, and who had been closely scrutinizing the boy, exclaimed:

"Why, Jaspao Thapa, I know this lad! I noticed him fighting manfully during their assault on my fortress, when we beat the white men back. Thou sayest true. 'Tis a brave lad,—though he nearly slew my brother Rewant."

As the man spoke, Jack knew him for their formidable opponent of Kalunga, the famous and redoubtable Balbhadar, who had escaped to Jytak with his seventy survivors. But behind Colonel Balbhadar Sing he perceived, to his dismay, an invalid Gurkha warrior, lying on a rough couch against the wall, and him he recognized as the man he had wounded in single combat on the slopes of Kalunga. This was Rewant, the brother of the colonel. He had been carried to Jytak by his unwounded comrades, and now grinned on recognizing the enemy who had laid him low. But it was a grin that bore no malice.

"*Ram, Ram,** *sahib*," was his greeting as he extended a hand, and he continued in broken Hindustani: "You are very good fighter."

Not to be outdone in courtesy, the ensign expressed a hope that the wound was not very painful and that he would soon be better.

* "Good-day." Really an expression commending the person greeted to the care of the god Rama.

"Nay, do not be sorry," was the reply. "I should have killed you had you not struck me down, and when you wounded me I should have liked to have killed you three times over. I shall soon be better to fight you again, and perhaps I shall slay you next time."

Jack laughingly replied that he sincerely hoped not.

Though a number of the Gurkhas who formed Ranjur Thapa's army in Jytak, scowled at the prisoner and could not understand why his life was spared, yet on the whole Jack's captors were courteous and treated him well. Before many days had passed the English boy had become quite popular, and many of those who had at first detested him for a white man, were won over and showed their change of feeling by rendering their enemy little services that he appreciated. The fact that Jaspao treated him as a brother had a great deal to do with the lad's popularity, because Jaspao, the gallant leader, the superb fighter, and merry comrade, was the prime favourite of all ranks in Jytak. It is hardly necessary to say, however, that our hero was by no means happy, and was very anxious as to the fate of his chum and the prospects of British success. The men around him boasted of the loss they had inflicted on the British and of how the garrison of Kalunga had kept at bay more than five times their number. In spite of the fact that their force barely exceeded 2,000 men, the Gurkhas seemed to have every confidence in themselves, their leaders and their military skill; and though they

respected the British he soon discovered that they despised the sepoys.

Jack found this hard to understand, for he had heard of the glorious feats of arms performed by the sepoys, of the gallant charges they had made and met, and of the many proofs of heroism they had given during the past half-century. He knew that they came of military races and soldier blood, many of them being Rajputs, perhaps the proudest race in the world, and yet he had noticed that, brave as they usually were, the sepoys looked on these little *parbattias* (highlanders) with dread, as demons rather than soldiers. To his surprise he found that the Nepalese—though Hindus by religion, and though many of them wore the sacred thread—were great meat eaters and did not object to his eating with them or touching their food. They simply washed hands and face, and the meal was over in half an hour; and they laughed to scorn the ceremonials of the sepoys who must bathe from head to foot both before and after meals, and must eat their food whilst nearly naked, however cold the weather may be.

The day following his arrival at the fort the five men who had assisted Jaspao in his capture returned from their unsuccessful hunt for his chum, and Jack was greatly relieved. Instead of another British ensign they brought with them a trophy in the shape of a magnificent leopard skin—not a very large one, but most beautifully marked. The young *subadar* smiled as he perceived the boy closely regarding the spotted hide.

"Do you recognize the skin?" he enquired, and the *shikarris* grinned.

Jack stared, wondering what he meant, and Jaspao burst into laughter.

"That is the fellow who startled you so in the jungle," said he. "We were not very far away, and the leopard heard us though you did not. You wondered why he left you so suddenly, but we knew. He fled from us, but Hari Sing Gurung there in front of him he did not see until too late. He sprang at him, but Hari Sing has killed many leopards, and you heard the cry as the kukri reached his heart. Only one blow was needed. Look there."

Jaspao pointed to a clean cut in the hide, that had ended the leopard's career. Jack gazed thereat half fascinated, recalling the horror of that cry, and his fright in the jungle.

A few days after his capture he learned that General Martindell had arrived with reinforcements, and rejoiced that Frank had safely discharged his trust. Then an assault was made—only, alas! to be beaten back; whereupon the garrison, headed by his friend Jaspao and by Balbhadar, sallied out kukri or *bujali* in hand, and rushed yelling upon the broken ranks in the manner that the wild Scottish Highlanders were wont to charge the Hanoverian troops with their claymores a century before. The sepoys broke, attempted to rally, and broke again, sweeping the British infantry back with them, and scores lost their lives in the confusion. Home from the fight came Jaspao, radiant and happy as he received the congratulations of his brother, the

commandant. Many of the little men, however, did not come back.

At the date of Jack's capture the garrison of Jytak were busily engaged in the celebration of the great Gurkha festival, the *Dashera*, though they were several weeks past the authentic time for these rejoicings. This came about because the larger part of the garrison had been too much occupied in preparations for the war, or, marching rapidly along the frontier, had had neither time nor inclination to indulge in rites and festivities, and so they had postponed the date of their *Dashera*,

According to tradition the territories of a certain rajah of the Deccan were once ravaged by demons who were destroying people, cattle, and crops wholesale. Sacrifice and prayers having been offered to the goddess Devi, she came to their assistance and totally annihilated the fiends after nine days' continuous fighting. Being a festival of so warlike a nature, the *Dashera* appeals to the Gurkhas more than any other, and though the tradition has really nothing to do with Nepal, the people of that land of giant mountains and pigmy heroes have adopted this as their national feast. To this day in all our Gurkha battalions ten days' holiday is allowed for the celebration of the rites and the exhibitions of skill with the kukri.

Ensign Russell was an interested witness and, having the good commonsense to take every opportunity of learning the language, he tried his best to understand the speeches that were made, and Jaspao willingly assisted him in his struggles with the dialect.

The many heroic deeds of the goddess were read aloud each day, but Jack could make out very little,—just a word here and there. He could appreciate better the athletic feats performed by the soldiers, wrestling, exhibitions of strength, and dexterity with the kukri. On the tenth day—the fourth after his entry into Jytak—the crowning rites were performed. A large number of goats and buffaloes had been kept in readiness and were now brought into the courtyard to be sacrificed. These unfortunate animals represented the demons of various size and degrees of ferocity conquered by the goddess Devi, and in her honour they were to be slain once again. The first victims were the goats,—big, tough animals tied to posts. The younger Gurkhas, some being mere boys, severed their heads with one stroke of their razor-edged weapons. The kukri is short and curved, the concave or inner edge being exceedingly sharp, and the outer edge broad and heavy. To sever the head with one blow of so short a weapon requires the greatest deftness and strength of arm and wrist. When all the goats were disposed of the buffaloes were brought forward. For this operation the kukri was discarded for the *bujali*, a very sharp sword, wielded by both hands. Though one or two performers with this weapon failed at the first stroke, the majority were successful.

This slaughter of the harmless animals was not a pretty sight, and so much blood made Jack feel queer. The Nepalese smote as though they actually believed that the quadrupeds really were the demons

they represented, and as though the goddess would surely be pleased by this proof of their zeal on her behalf. For a heathen sacrifice, however, the mode of killing was not cruel, as death was nearly always instantaneous. Jaspao Thapa had been standing by the side of the boy and had as yet taken no hand in the proceedings, contenting himself with clapping and encouraging the youngsters, and applauding any stroke more clever than usual. And proud were those young soldiers who received a meed of praise from so noted a swordsman. He noted Jack's look of distaste and smiled.

"You English are very queer," he observed. "You kill men in battle and die yourselves without a murmur, and yet you cannot look upon the slaughter of mere animals without a shudder."

"Tell me, Jaspao, do you really believe that your goddess Devi is pleased in this way?" Jaspao shrugged his shoulders.

"Why not?" he asked in reply, then laughed. "At any rate," he went on, "it makes our young men handy with the kukri and that is good for them and for their country. You English kill cattle and sheep and even pigs by the thousand, and though the slaughter is not done in public, yet you all know that it is done. You eat the meat none the less heartily, and in a day or two you will be eating the flesh of those goats yonder, my comrade."

The speaker drew his kukri from its sheath and stepped forward. One buffalo, an animal rather smaller than the others, remained to be sacrificed, and the crowd stared in anticipation of something

good, for Subadar Jaspao Thapa was a general favourite and his prowess with the kukri well known. He poised the keen blade above his head, and with a lightning-like stroke severed the buffalo's head as though it had been that of a kid. A great cheer went up and Jaspao returned to Jack's side, well pleased with himself and with the applause that greeted his feat. The number of men in the world who could have equalled it, with a knife no larger than the kukri, might have been counted on one's fingers.

The garrison of Jytak now considered that the goddess Devi must be sufficiently gratified by these tributes from her adorers, so they proceeded to offer worship to their kukris and other implements of war, and to ask protection from them during the coming year. * The feast concluded with fresh trials of skill with the half-moon blades. Some hundreds of the garrison left the courtyard and made for a thicket a short distance away. With one stroke of the kukri, soldier after soldier cut down trees the thickness of a man's arm. After felling a good number in this way, a few picked swordsmen tried their hands at a feat still more difficult. Limbs of the fallen trees having been cut off and placed on a strong bench, the kukri-wielders slashed at the tough green wood, cutting off slices no thicker than a piece of shoe-leather. Again Jaspao Thapa excelled all others. The bough that he attacked

* In Gurkha battalions the regimental colours form objects of worship every year at the Dashera feast.

was one of the largest, and his strokes rained down upon it, the bright blade shimmering in the sunlight as it flashed up and down without a pause, and slice after slice fell to the ground, few of them exceeding a halfpenny in thickness. This operation they called "*chinnu*"—to slice off.

"Could your English soldiers do that?" the subadar boastfully enquired, grinning all over his face as Jack stepped forward to congratulate him. "You have no steel to equal the steel of Nepal."

"No, I grant you," Jack made answer, "that our swords are not good enough for that, but I'll show you something. Get me a big potato."

Jaspao promptly sent for a specimen of this homely vegetable.

Now General Russell was a first-rate swordsman, and from childhood Jack had been trained by him to the use of the sword. He had inherited a steady wrist and a sure eye, and as he grew older "the pater" tested him in many ways. He had trained the boy to hold apples on the palm of his hand, without flinching, whilst he sliced them in half. Trusting his father perfectly, Jack did not shrink nor falter as the blade descended, and therefore had never been hurt. Later on, after much practice with the fruit on some fragile support whose injury was of no consequence, he had been allowed to perform the same feat himself, his father holding the apple. Now he could do it without a qualm.

The soldier presently returned with a large round potato.

"Dare you hold that on the palm of your hand,

so?" Jack asked, showing his little chum how to place himself. "If so, I can cut it in half without hurting you."

"Can you really?" exclaimed Jaspao. "I should like to see it. I am not afraid."

"Very good."

Drawing the sword that the Gurkhas had chivalrously allowed him to retain, he stepped back and looked at Jaspao. He saw that the son of Amar Sing would not flinch. The Gurkhas crowded round, holding their breath and quivering with excitement, for this was a novel feat. Poising the blade carefully, Jack struck, and the two halves of the potato fell apart.

The Nepalese cheered and chattered with admiration. Jaspao looked at his palm and gave an exclamation of amazement as he saw that, though the potato was completely severed, his skin was not even broken.

"Good, good!" he cried. "You must teach me that."

CHAPTER X

JACK GIVES HISTORY LESSONS TO THE GURKHAS

CHRISTMAS DAY as spent by Jack Russell was anything but a time of merriment, and on the morning of New Year's Day another unsuccessful assault upon Jytak was made. But though the British failed to carry the place by storm, this time when the Gurkhas sallied forth and charged, the sepoys stood firm and held their ground as they had done in all previous wars, and both white and black troops sturdily withstood the fierce shock. Right up to the muzzles of the cannon charged the mountaineers, striking down the bayonets or reaching over with the short kukris. But they were being mown down by the British fire and were losing terribly, so, reluctantly and with faces to the foe, they retired within the walls, holding a higher opinion of the sepoys. The stoical fortitude of the wounded Nepalese aroused great sympathy in our youngster's heart, and he did what little he could to relieve their suffering. There were very few medicines in the fort, and these were not very efficacious. Fresh turpentine obtained from the pines made a tolerable poultice for some cases, and cedar-oil also proved useful. *Chiretta*, an exceedingly bitter tonic, was used as a febrifuge,

but was not nearly so good as quinine would have been.

From this fight Jaspao came back a sorry wreck. Not only had a bullet entered the flesh of his right arm between the wrist and elbow, but he had also received a sword cut across the fingers of his left hand, not deep, but very painful. He was mournful, not on account of the pain, but because for some time he would be useless as a fighter. A young friend of Jaspao, Lalbir Burathoki, a boy who had been kind to our ensign, had had his jaw shattered. Though both were suffering greatly, they gave not a sign nor a groan; and Jack could suggest no satisfactory course of treatment, though he bound up the wounds as well as he could.

Suddenly a brilliant idea struck him, and its audacity pleased him.

"Look here," said John Collingwood, boylike as ever, "just go over to the British camp and ask for Doctor White. He'll attend to your wounds."

Jaspao grinned.

"Why, so I will. Come along, Lalbir," he cried to his comrade.

"Wait a bit," said Jack. "I'll give you a note to my friend."

He returned to them before long and gave Lalbir a letter and parcel addressed to Frank Dorricot, the contents being Jack's New Year's present to his chum. They left the fort and painfully made their way to the camp of the enemy, carrying a white rag as Jack had instructed them. The sentry challenged and the guard

conducted them to the officer in charge, who stared as they stated their errand.

"Well, of all the cheeky beggars I've ever met, you two are the pick!" he exclaimed to the two sufferers as soon as he had recovered from the shock. Not understanding the speech, they simply grinned. The officers and men around burst into loud laughter at the coolness of the petition, and enjoying the fun, they boisterously conducted the two Gurkhas to the hospital, where the surgeon extracted the bullets and dressed the wounds.

"Make us quite well quickly," pleaded Jaspao, "we want to fight you again in a few days' time." *

Doctor White understood *Urdu* and he shook with admiring merriment, bidding them rest in hospital for the night. The *subadar* then asked his comrade to bring forth the letter, and, pointing to the inscription, remarked :

"I want to see *him*, sahib."

"Send for Ensign Dorricot of the 162nd," the surgeon said to one of his assistants, and before long Frank put in an appearance and looked greatly bewildered on beholding the persons who wished to see him. He little guessed that this was their second, not their first meeting.

"*Ram, Ram, sahib*," the Gurkha opened the conversation, grinning cavernously. "Have you been frightened by any leopards lately?"

Frank Dorricot stared at his questioner, more mystified than ever.

* This incident actually occurred during the siege of Jytak.

"What!" continued Jaspao. "Have you then forgotten the leopard in the jungle and the shriek that startled you and Russail Sahib so? See, here is what uttered that scream."

So saying, he bade Lalbir Burathoki open the bundle. A leopard-skin lay before the astonished boy.

"Do you not recognize him now, sahib?"

Jaspao Thapa thereupon handed over the letter from Frank's chum. To say that the boy was glad would be very inadequate,—he was simply astounded. He read and re-read the letter that briefly informed him of the writer's adventures since their parting, and of the courteous treatment experienced at the hands of his gaolers. Jack also made him a present of the leopard-skin, which he had bought from Hari Sing Gurung, and he explained the circumstances. No sooner had Ensign Dorricot read the note a second time than he exclaimed:

"Oh, Doctor White, what do you think? Jack Russell is a prisoner in Jytak. They haven't hurt him, and the little beggar's enjoying himself immensely."

"Is that so? Well, I *am* glad," replied the genial surgeon, and his joy was shared by all who were acquainted with Jack.

"He might be on a pic-nic," Frank continued, "the way he's carrying on over there. He'll be staining himself next with walnut-juice like they do in books, and we'll hear of him as a Gurkha chieftain or a rajah. No offence, Carruthers."

Carruthers smiled and replied that no offence was taken, for the Eurasian was very friendly with Frank Dorricot just now.

"We must inform the general and see if he cannot procure the lad's release," suggested Lieutenant Knowles, who was now able to walk and was progressing favourably. The others agreed.

Frank led the wounded Jaspao into his tent and had a long conversation respecting all that had happened after he had stolen away on that memorable day. He became quite excited as he listened to the tale of his chum's adventures, and cried in English as the Gurkha officer finished his story:

"What a lucky beggar he is! I almost wish I'd been kidnapped with him." Then in *Urdu* he continued: "You have been very good to him, subadar. You're a good man,—a real brick!" he ended, relapsing into English again.

Jaspao Thapa grinned at the praise,

"Excuse me a moment," said Frank, running out to borrow a quill and some ink. He presently returned and wrote a long letter to the prisoner, informing him of all that had happened since his capture, and enclosing a couple of unopened letters from home. For a mail had been brought to the hills when General Martindell's reinforcement had joined the column.

Next day the wounded Gurkhas, grinning profusely and heartily thanking the doctor, departed in the best of tempers, and the soldiers commented on the jolly appearance of their fierce enemies.

"Call them naygurs?" observed a trooper of the Royal Irish dragoons. "Why, they're Oirishmen for all their littleness and their quare lingo!"

"That's a thrue wurrd," said another. "I wager

it's knowin' what to do wid a dhrop of the craythur they'd be as well as any Christian."

"Oi wance knew a man," a third chimed in, "from Kerry he was, only he's dead now, worse luck, and it's the very shpit of that naygur man over there he was, only twice as ugly."

Lieutenant Knowles drew forth a cheroot and made a sign. Jaspao nodded significantly and Knowles placed the consoler between the subadar's teeth and struck a light. Frank and he offered to accompany the wounded fellows through the circle of pickets in order to learn more of their comrade's adventures, and amid cheers from the assembled soldiers Jaspao and his friend departed.

Subadar Jaspao Thapa returned to Jytak a curious figure, with both arms in slings; and his bandaged comrade handed Dorricot's packet to the English prisoner.

"That doctor is a good man," the son of Amar Sing asserted with decision. "We feel better already; do we not, Burathoki?"

"I feel ready to fight again to-day," young Lalbir Burathoki replied, with a grin whose effect was most comical by reason of the bandaged jaw.

"Ah, thou art lucky, Lalbir," Jaspao sadly observed. "A wound in the jaw does not prevent one fighting, but to have both arms useless! Ugh, it is good to be wounded in the face and to have scars that every-one may see."

Jaspao was a grand little fellow who did not comprehend the meaning of fear. He only knew that it was some inexplicable and disgusting form

of madness that possessed certain inferior specimens of humanity, making them miserable when all reasonable persons (like himself, of course) ought to be most happy, and bringing eternal shame upon their heads. But it must be reluctantly confessed that he liked admiration—as who does not?—and an honourable scar on the face had the value of a medal in his eyes.

"Yes, that doctor is a good and learned man," he went on, "and I must warn our fellows not to slay him. The white men were all very good to us. I like the British; it is good to fight your soldiers. When we war against the natives of Hindustan it is poor *shikar*,—like hunting wolves, but this is fighting tigers. That is sport fit for a Gurkhali. I have slain twenty-seven tigers, Russail Sahib, and thou didst see me kill my twenty-eighth."

"That is good, Jaspao. Thou must have begun early."

"Twelve years old I was when I slew my first in the Terai. At fifteen I killed one with a kukri only. He sprang at me and I had no musket, so I dropped quickly on my back, and as he flew over me I ripped him up. Ha! that was better *shikar* than slaying goats, and I lay in bed for two months, for his clawing was fearful as he died. When we have taught you British a lesson, we are thinking of declaring war against the Sikhs. People say that they are good fighting men, and their army is four times greater than ours, with European artillery and officers, and thousands of cavalry,—and we have not a single *sowar!*" (trooper).

"You are no good for cavalry," said Jack derisively. "Your legs are too short."

"True," Jaspao admitted, "we cannot ride and we are too small to manage big guns properly, but we make good infantry, though the *madhesias* do call us 'the monkeymen of the Himalayas'. *They* are not worth fighting, but the Sikhs are, I am told, though they are only men of the plains after all."

Jaspao Thapa never had his wish. Thirty years later, however, his son, serving as a *jemadar* (lieutenant) in the Sirmur Battalion of Gurkhas (the heroes of the siege of Delhi), helped the British arms to break the power of the Sikhs.

Jack opened the packet and hurriedly read Frank's note. He then turned to the longer epistles from his father and mother, the former's letter causing a manly note to ring in the lad's breast, whilst the latter was full of a mother's love for her far-away boy. Needless to say that neither father nor mother dreamt of the situation in which their son would be placed when he received their message. Indeed, when they wrote they were not aware that the 162nd had been ordered on active service.

The news from home was good; the maternal letter gave a full and detailed description of the wedding of their nephew to Margaret Upton, and the account of the bride's striking beauty on this occasion gave rise to a pleasurable pain. Poor Jack! How he would have writhed had he dreamt that anyone in the world had guessed his secret! How strenuously would he have denied the failing and would have believed himself!

News of public importance followed,—weighty tidings, but not altogether unexpected. Napoleon, whose cause had seemed hopeless when Jack left home, had been caught and banished to the isle of Elba, and Europe was rid of its nightmare. He could not repress an exclamation of delight on reading this.

"What is it, Russail Bahadur?" Jaspao asked. "Thou art pleased?"

"It is good news of a big war we are engaging in nearer home," Jack replied. "Our great enemy is a prisoner and peace is concluded."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Colonel Balbhadar who had overheard. "Can you then be fighting other enemies as well as the Gurkhas? Surely we are enough for one nation to war against?"

"Tell us all about it?" was Jaspao's request.

A number of the little men gathered round, anxious to hear of warfare and deeds of heroism, whilst Jaspao prepared to interpret for the benefit of his comrades. The boy spoke, mixing his *Urdu* with as many words of *Khas-Kura* as he could muster, and told them how Napoleon had risen and conquered many countries and made himself master of Europe; how his generals had been driven out of Spain and vanquished one after the other by the great Irish soldier, who had finally entered France with his conquering army.

It must be confessed that he failed to give the Russian winter due credit for the downfall of the great Corsican, but, inspired by an English love of fair-play, he was enthusiastic in his praises of Bona-

parte's military genius and of the courage shown by the French in their magnificent victories against overwhelming odds.

Perchance this was partly due to the consideration that the British success was enhanced by the fact that it could be shown that where every other nation had failed we had succeeded.

The Gurkhas listened with the greatest interest and not without admiration. He then told of the triumphs of Nelson at sea and how the navies of France and Spain had been shattered and captured; but these stories of naval exploits hardly moved them at all, for they could not understand what great ships were like. But as the boy described the thousands upon thousands engaged at Vittoria; when he attempted to picture the thunder of the charging cavalry masses, and the roar of the hundreds of cannon, the eyes of the listeners glared, they clenched their teeth, and every man of them longed to have been there.

"Ulu-ulu-ulu!" they gasped, "that must have been good shikar!"

"Truly these English are a great nation," reflected Balbhadar as the boy concluded.

An elderly man rose from his sitting posture on the floor and began to recite the deeds of the Gurkhas, while a hush fell upon the assembly. Declaring that Nepal was the only kingdom that had not been sullied by the feet of Mohammedan conquerors, he related how the Moslem *Nawab*, Kasim Ali Khan, had despatched an army of 60,000 warriors to invade the Gurkhali territories, and how

this vast array had been cut to pieces by four hundred scouts of Prithi Narayan, the founder of the great house of Gurkha.

The speaker paused to allow the words to sink into the mind of the Englishman. Jack pretended to place faith in every word, but inwardly reflected that the old man was "coming it a bit too strong," and that a few grains of salt were needed to help digestion. Nevertheless, though the numbers were without doubt greatly exaggerated, there was a better foundation for this history than he thought possible at the time. Kasim Ali's powerful army *was* annihilated by a handful of scouts, though Oriental fancy had augmented the numbers to 60,000 men.

The veteran warrior went on to recite the true story of the march of the Gurkhas, towards the close of the past century, across the Himalayas to Lhassa,—a truly marvellous undertaking—and how they had compelled the living type of Buddha to pay tribute to the Brahminical king of Nepal. He spoke with the greatest pride—for he himself had been an officer of the daring band—of the wonderful hardihood and contempt of danger shown during the return march, across hundreds of miles of snow-clad mountains, mountains beside which the Alps are but puny dwarfs. The remembrance of the hardships endured and the danger from deep snow, from avalanche, crevasse and glacier, where foot of man had never trodden, warmed his blood whilst his face shone with enthusiasm.

He omitted to relate, however, that the Emperor

of China, enraged at the insult offered to the religion of which he was the head, had sent an enormous army to demand and obtain restitution.

A conference was held by the officers of the 162nd and of other corps, and as a result Ranjur Thapa received the offer of a large sum of money on condition that he would release Ensign Russell. They were afraid that should Jytak be taken and the Gurkhas defeated, the boy would probably suffer from their resentment and be put to death. The commandant indignantly refused the bribe, replying that Gurkhas were neither Bengalis nor Pathans and were not in the habit of selling either countrymen or prisoners. So Jack endeavoured to reconcile himself to durance vile as best he could. His captivity was not, as has been shown, a very irksome one. They trusted to his honour and gave him plenty of food,—and the latter means a lot to an English boy!

Nevertheless, as the days passed by and the British seemed unable to make any impression on the fort, our hero began to feel sick at heart, and his first experience of war was certainly not of an encouraging nature. For the first time in Indian history the British arms had been unsuccessful against inferior numbers, though the fact that the mountainous country was all in favour of the *parbattias* and all against the *madhesias*, or sepoys from the plains, must be taken into account.

He could not, however, help liking the little foemen who bore their wounds with such Spartan fortitude and endurance, and who, though such fero-

cious fighters, were generally good-natured, and though they boasted of their prowess and their victories over the English, yet frequently tried to please the young sahib whom they had captured. Many a time the lad did what little he could for their injuries, and the men thanked him in their highland tongue, with which he was making great progress. He little thought how useful this accomplishment would prove later on.

On one occasion his life was saved by a man whose pain he had relieved. Jack was standing beneath an outer wall that was crumbling under the British fire. A block of loosened masonry crashed down, and had not this man knocked him roughly on one side, his career would have ended then and there. But the Gurkha did not escape so easily; he saved the English lad at the expense of his own crushed arm.

Food, though by no means abundant, was not altogether scarce at Jytak, and Ranjur Thapa, knowing that the English require more sustenance than Asiatics, did not stint our ensign. In addition to the native cakes or bread, of wheat and Indian corn, he was frequently given the flesh of more than one variety of deer, as well as pheasants, *chickore*, or hill partridge, and other meat. Potatoes and cabbage, though not so good as our English growth, also proved very welcome.

Remembering Doctor White's account of the Gurkhas' honesty and truthfulness, Jack perceived that the surgeon's opinion was well founded, and that his gaolers were far superior in these respects

to the inhabitants of Hindustan, whether Moslem or Brahmin, though the fastidious Hindus beat the Nepalese hollow with respect to cleanliness. There were naturally exceptions to the rule, and while he was in the fort half a dozen men were tried and found guilty of having stolen from their comrades several skin bottles of *janr*, a kind of beer made from rice, to which the Gurkhas are greatly addicted. They were sentenced to the cells, and to hard labour during the day-time.

The Nepalese convict system appeared very quaint in the eyes of the civilized onlooker. The "jail-birds" were condemned to rebuild those portions of the walls that had been damaged by the British shot, to perform all manner of rough work, and to cut down and drag in timber from the neighbouring woods. When they went forth to their work no guard accompanied them; they were left free and unshackled. They could easily have escaped, or by turning traitors and giving information to the British, could have earned good pay, but no such ideas ever entered into their thick, loyal skulls. They did their work and came back of their own accord to the cells in the calmest manner, and Jack was informed that this free and easy method of treating prisoners was quite usual in Nepal.

A more exciting and more tragical incident occurred about this time. One of Balbhadar's seventy Magar heroes, survivors from Kalunga, who had been laid up with a wound, now that he had quite recovered, chanced to recognize amongst the men of Ranjur Thapa an ancient enemy,—a man

who had treacherously murdered the Magar's brother. The murderer was a Khas—one of the chief clans of Nepal. The Khas have more Hindu and less Mongolian blood than the Magars and Gurungs, who form the backbone of our Gurkha battalions.

The Magar at once flew at his brother's assassin, but before a blow could be struck Balbhadar Sing, who happened to be present, ordered the enemies to be kept apart. The case was tried before Ranjur and Balbhadar, and though there was little doubt of the man's guilt, proof could not be obtained on the spot. After a consultation the two chief officers pronounced a judgment that is by no means rare in Nepal even at the present time.

Both men were to be taken outside the fort, armed with their kukris only. The accused was given ten yards start, and if the avenger could catch and kill him before sunset—it wanted two hours of the time—justice would be satisfied. If unsuccessful within the time the assassin was to go free until the war should be over.

Half the garrison assembled to watch the combat, and public sympathy was on the side of the avenger, for nearly all the warriors, including Balbhadar, Ranjur and Jaspao, were either Magars or Gurungs.

Instead of showing fight the Khas, who, though taller, was not so sturdy as his opponent, and who was, moreover, burdened by a guilty conscience, fled with all his speed, the Magar darting after him with cries of rage. Down the mountain side they

fled, across a *nullah*, until lost to view in the depths of a thicket.

Just before sunset the Magar trotted back, and a look of satisfaction was on his face.

"The murderer is slain," he answered simply, in reply to the shower of questions. "He beat me through the wood, but when he turned up the mountain side I had him."

CHAPTER XI

JACK LEAVES THE FRYING-PAN AND TUMBLES INTO THE FIRE

THE time of Jack's imprisonment was drawing to a close. One happy day he was sent for by the the Gurkha commandant, who informed him that he had decided to set him free in exchange for a badly wounded Gurkha officer lately taken prisoner. Jack, who had had no idea of his captor's intention, thanked the chivalrous Ranjur very heartily.

"I should not consider it my duty to let you go, even in exchange," replied the commandant, "were it not that I feel sure that my opponents are tired of Jytak. I have reason to believe that they do not mean to make any more attempts to take the place at present, but will quietly wait for reinforcements. Believing, then, that there will be little or no fighting here for some time, you may go to your comrades if you will give me your word that you will give no information respecting the fortress, and that you will not take part in any fighting against Jytak. Elsewhere you may fight if you wish. We like you very much."

Jack readily accepted these terms and again thanked the general.

There was sorrow within the walls of Jytak fort

when the time came for the prisoner to rejoin his regiment. By his pluck and fortitude, his kindness and consideration for the feeling of others, by his attentions to the wounded and, above all, by his merry temper, John Collingwood Russell had gained the friendship of the whole garrison. Gurkhas are quick of temper, and when roused can be very fierce, but they are easily appeased, and their cheery and jolly spirits enable them speedily to convert enemies into friends, and, unlike most Asiatics, they do not cherish malice.

Jack shook hands until his arm ached, with Balbhadar and Ranjur Thapa, with Rewant Sing, the man whom he had run through and whose wound had almost healed, and who had conceived a great affection for the English boy, with officers and privates, leaving Jaspao's farewell to the last.

"I am going with you, Russell Sahib," said the *subadar*. "I will see you safely to the British lines, and I hope we shall meet again, and shall look out for you in the thickest of the fighting."

Half way to the camp they were met by Frank Dorricot and Lieutenant Knowles, and Jaspao turned back.

"Good-bye, Jaspao Thapa," said Jack, with unfeigned earnestness; "I shall never forget how kind you have been to me, and I hope we shall meet again, —that is, when the war is over, for I have no wish to be served as you served that buffalo."

The Gurkha laughed softly.

"You've been a brick, Mr. Jaspao," Frank declared in English. "Good-bye."

They all shook hands, and the Gurkha watched them until out of sight, then slowly returned to the fort.

"It's good to have you back again, old man," said Dorricot emphatically; "it has been deadly dull without you. Those beggars *have* been good to you; I declare you've had a jollier time than we have."

"It might have been much worse, but I'm glad to get back. I should like you to have been with me in Jytak; it's been an experience worth having. What's going to be done next?"

"Don't know. No one seems to know. I'm afraid that Jytak is proving too strong a nut to crack. Ochterlony is doing well though, they say. I wish I was in his column; he's a grand general. I'm afraid we'll have to wait until he has beaten Amar Sing, your friend's father."

Ensign Russell was greeted by the rest of his comrades as one back from the dead. He told the tale of his adventures,—they had of course already heard from Dorricot the story of his self-sacrifice when surprised by the Gurkhas in the jungle,—and he filled them with admiration of the Nepalese courtesy and chivalry. Before the war these *parbattias* had been looked down upon as utter barbarians because the sepoys called them unclean and impure savages, * so that everyone had been surprised by the kindly treatment show by these little men to the wounded.

* The high-caste Hindus are wont to regard all other races as the Hebrews in olden time looked down upon the Gentiles.

"If we can only raise a few Gurkha regiments after the war," Major Brooks ventured to prophesy, "I shouldn't be surprised if we could turn them into soldiers who'll be worth their weight in gold to us."

This surmise of the far-seeing major has proved well-founded. The Gurkhas have for eighty years proved the staunchest infantry in the Indian army, and when in 1857 the Mutiny tested the loyalty of all Indian races never for an instant did the Gurkhas waver.

As Colonel Gregory had arrived with the other wing of the 162nd, Major Brooks was no longer in command. The colonel was the only one who did not seem particularly pleased to see our hero once more, but that was his way. He had no feeling against the lad, but Colonel Gregory had no intimate friends, and he took little interest in any of his officers and men beyond seeing that they did their duty. Nodding to Jack, he simply said:

"I'm glad you are back, Russell; take care you don't get caught again."

He then turned away and continued his conversation with the adjutant.

Jack was not so much surprised at this display of nonchalance as by the reception accorded him by the colonel's cousin. Philip Carruthers was most friendly and appeared genuinely pleased to see his late enemy back in safety. He even shook hands, saying:

"Whilst you've been a prisoner over there, Rus-

sell, I've been thinking what a pity it is that we are not friends. You've seen the worst side of me, though I may as well admit that I do get savage when my temper's roused, and I'm always sorry for it afterwards. I'm very glad you've been released, and I hope you will let bygones be bygones."

"Willingly," Jack replied, and shook hands again vigorously.

Frank, a witness of the reconciliation, sniffed at this display of contrition on Carruthers' part.

"You're easily taken in, Carrots," he remarked afterwards, using the old name; "a baby could make a fool of you! You don't believe the scheming hypocrite means it, do you?"

"Certainly I do. Why not? I think we've both wronged him in thinking him capable of trying to murder us."

"Bosh, you thick-headed Jack! He's only plotting something worse and wants to put you off your guard. He's tried to be friendly with me, only I haven't encouraged him, and he's told me over and over again how he hoped that you'd escape. Once he went so far as to hint that you would be justified in breaking your parole, but I shut him up quickly."

To our ensign's surprise a messenger from Jytak appeared in camp next day, bringing a parcel from Jaspao. The Gurkha soldier was shown into the mess-room where Jack and Frank happened to be alone. Opening the packet Jack drew forth a kukri-knife in its leather scabbard, and the following letter:

"My little English brother,—I beg that you will accept this little present from your Gurkha comrade. You have done much for us in Jytak and we all thank you for the great service you have rendered us, for through your assistance I hope to be able to raise myself to honour. I have no doubt now that we shall soon be able to drive your army from before Jytak. Your friend,

JASPAO THAPA."

Jack handed the document to his chum, saying: "Ain't he a grand little chap? I must send him something in return."

Frank spelled out with difficulty the badly-written Hindustani characters, ending with the subadar's curious and childlike signature.

"You were a lucky beggar, Jack, to fall into his hands," he commented; "but what does he mean by talking about the great service you have rendered the Jytak garrison, and saying that he has no doubt that they will be able to drive us away?"

"I suppose he alludes to a little bandaging and doctoring I did for them. I guess old Jaspao don't know enough *Urdu* to say what he means decently without seeming absurd; and as to driving us away, they were always telling me they were going to wipe us out, so that's nothing new. Cheerful chaps these Gurkhas, ready to play with you or lick you, save your life or kill you, so long as it's honest fighting."

"Well, Mr. Jaspao's been right so far about licking us."

Frank glanced through the note again and sud-

denly changed his tone to one of mock indignation.

"Traitor!" he declaimed, "I believe you've sold the British army for dirty Gurkha gold and to save your own worthless skin! Give me half the bribe or I'll have you shot!... Hello, Carruthers! Want anything?"

Carruthers smiled sweetly.

"No," he replied; "I happened to catch sight of the kukri on the table. A present from that Gurkha friend of yours, Russell, I suppose? It's very decent of him. I suppose you learned to speak the Gurkha language while you were there?"

"Picked up a word or two, that's all."

This very modest estimate of his by no means slight knowledge of the language, appeared to give Carruthers satisfaction. He turned and left the room, saying:

"Hope I haven't interrupted you?"

"What the deuce does he want poking his nose in here?" Frank angrily exclaimed. "I like him less when he tries to be friendly than when he's an open cad. Bah! the fellow *scratched* me with his claws,—like a girl!"

"Well, I suppose he's as much right to be here as we have," Jack replied, "so don't lose your temper, my boy."

"All very well, Jack, but suppose he took that oration of mine seriously?"

"Bosh! What harm could he do even if he tried? So lend me a pen, I'm going to reply to Jaspao. Look here, Frank, you know that pair of silver-

mounted pistols of poor Tolland's that you bought when his effects were put up for sale? Well, I'll give you the price you paid for them. Will you trade?"

"For Jaspao!"

"Yes. I'll tell him, though, that they must not be used against the British, only for *shikar* or against other enemies."

"Very well, you can have them, Jack, as they are for him."

"Thanks, old man, you're a brick."

Dorricot went for the pistols and made them into a parcel whilst Jack wrote his letter of thanks, and the messenger returned to his master.

The two ensigns then walked out, relating their adventures, criticizing the conduct of the campaign, comparing Gurkhas with sepoys, and freely giving their opinion regarding what they would have done and how they would have acted had they been in command.

Fortunately for all concerned they were not.

Whilst thus conversing together, a tall officer whom Jack had never seen before,—a Lieutenant Braddish, on General Martindell's staff,—strode up, and asked: "Which of you two is Ensign Russell?"

Our hero admitted his identity, and wondered what was now the matter. There was something distinctly unprepossessing in the man's appearance and manner, and the boy felt ill at ease.

"Look here, youngster," began the lieutenant, taking Jack's arm and walking him up and down, "we must get into that cursed fort somehow or

other: it will never do for British troops to be beaten by these niggers. Why, it would altogether destroy our prestige in Hindustan. Now, you ought to be able to give us some information about the weak points of the fort or garrison that should enable us to take it by stratagem. You see they think we've given up the idea altogether."

"I can't do that, sir. I was set free on the understanding that I give no information," replied the ensign.

"H'm, that's awkward! Of course, if you've given your promise, it would never do to go and give information to General Martindell,—that would be most dishonourable and you'd deserve to be kicked out of the army. Still.... well.... of course you must not think of breaking your word."

The lieutenant and the two boys walked on in silence for some moments before the senior officer resumed:

"Do you mind telling me some of your experiences in Jytak. I'm very interested in these Gurkhas; they seem to have treated you very well, did they not?"

"Very well indeed," was the reply. "Of course a few of them turned nasty, now and then, and several thought that I ought to have been put to death, but as a rule they treated me rather as a friend than a prisoner."

"Yes, that's because they knew that you had behaved like a plucky young hero, and they admired you. You're the right sort of English officer, Russell."

Jack felt that his prejudice against the lieutenant

had been unfounded, and he began to think better of the man who had so high an opinion of him. In this he merely resembled most boys and young men; and older folk are no wiser, but rather the more easily taken in.

The lieutenant continued:

"I should like to study their customs and habits because we shall probably enlist some of them in our regiments when the war is over. You really believe they are first-rate soldiers?"

"I should rather think they are!" was Jack's unhesitating expression of opinion. "Grand little soldiers!"

"I quite agree with you, Russell. Have they the same customs with regard to meals that our sepoys have; and what time are they usually at meals?"

Jack readily explained the differences in this respect between the *parbattias* and *madhesias* and told all he knew on the subject.

"And tell me, are they really smart?" the staff-officer continued. "Do they mount guard and post sentries as we do? Have they the sense to keep strong guards all night, or do they manage in a slipshod way, and allow their sentries to sleep during the small hours of the morning?"

"Well, of course," replied the boy, "they're not so strict as we are in that respect. You see, they...."

"Remember, old man," Dorricot quietly interposed, "you are now giving information concerning the fort."

Jack went very red, and Lieutenant Braddish loftily exclaimed: "Please don't interrupt, sir. I suppose that Ensign Russell is quite capable of

guarding his own honour. His tongue is not tied by his promise so that he is unable to chat with a friend."

The late prisoner had been thinking hard during this short speech and, having made up his mind, he now broke in:

"Dorricot's quite right, sir. I ought not to say anything that might tell against these men who have treated me so well, though I'm sure you would not dream of making such use of any information."

"Don't look at it in that foolish light, my lad," laughed the lieutenant. "Why, of course, it's quite different chatting to me in this way,—quite different from informing one of the senior officers."

"But I promised to give no information that could possibly make it easier for our army to capture the fortress; and if I told you or even Dorricot what you have asked me, the knowledge might be used against the garrison, even though you have no intention of so using it. And it wouldn't make any difference to Ranjur Thapa whether I had told it in confidence to a friend or purposely to our chief."

"Come, that's childish talk, man! not worthy of a sensible fellow like you. Besides, what could it matter to you if it were of service to us. You should be glad, if you've any patriotism! It would certainly be dishonourable if you gave information, but how could *you* help it, if, in your ordinary talk to friends, we picked up hints that might be of use. It wouldn't be your fault, Russell, in that case; there would be no one to blame, there would be less bloodshed on both sides and even your friends

the Gurkhas would suffer less, because they must be beaten in the end, and the war would be over sooner. If you don't want the war to end—well, then you're a bloodthirsty little beggar," concluded Lieutenant Braddish, smiling persuasively upon our ensign.

Frank Dorricot spoke up, scorn and contempt in his tone.

"Well, sir, our ideas of what is honourable fortunately do not agree with yours. You seem to see some difference between direct and indirect information, or direct and indirect *lying*, whichever you choose to call it. We don't."

"D—— your impertinence! Mind your own business,—it will be safer for you. Come, Russell, I'm older than you and I know what I'm talking about. I assure you there will be no harm in satisfying my curiosity. Besides, they're only niggers, and even if we do get into Jytak, surely you won't be sorry. Curse those Gurkhas! You can't bribe one of them to help you. With every other race of niggers we've ever fought against, we could always get any number of them to betray the others, if only we'd pay a high enough price. But not one of the little fiends can be bought over, and we *must* capture that fort."

"So, sir," replied Jack in great indignation, "so that is your idea of honour. You admit that the Gurkhas will not betray one another, and yet you want me, an Englishman, to set these 'niggers,'—as you call them, though they're no more niggers than we are,—a good example by betraying them

when they've treated me so nobly. Thank you! I can keep my own conscience even if you are my senior officer,—a fact I can't deny, but greatly regret."

So saying, Jack took his chum by the arm and turned away. The baffled Braddish followed, his face white with anger.

"Take care what you say, young man. You've made me out a liar and a man without honour. I've killed men for less than that."

"I don't see anything to boast of in that," was the lad's quiet retort.

"Well, you shall apologize," declared the other, quite as calmly.

"Be careful, Carrots; go warily," whispered Dorricot, anxiously. But our ensign's blood was up and he would not be cautious.

"Why should I apologize? I have not made you out to be what you have just called yourself—you must blame your own declarations and remarks for that—you gave yourself away without assistance from me. Anyhow, I'll apologize if you'll declare that you had not the slightest intention of getting any information regarding Jytak out of me, during our conversation."

Lieutenant Braddish smiled, and his smile was not pleasant to see. Dorricot's heart misgave him as he watched his chum rushing on his fate. After a slight pause, the staff-officer replied:

"Thank you!" he said, and his voice was very sweet. "That is indeed good of you. I don't mind telling you that my intention *was* to pump you,

and my intention now is to punish you for your impertinence unless you apologize."

The sneering tone and contemptuous expression were not likely to have a soothing effect on our ensign. Before he could realize how far he was going, he emphatically declared:

"Then you need not ask me to withdraw a word. I did not say that you were dishonourable or a liar before, but that is certainly my opinion now."

"You idiot!" whispered Frank, groaning. "Now you've done it. He'll kill you."

Braddish smiled, bowed and turned away, and the boys gloomily retraced their steps.

CHAPTER XII

THE DUEL

In the evening a few of the junior officers of the 162nd were sitting out on the rocks, enjoying the balmy air of early spring, watching now an eagle poised on outstretched wings high above them, now the thick forests clothing the hillsides on either hand with a garment of various shades of green. For the new leaves of the sycamore and silver birch were bursting forth, and the wonderful green of the young larches contrasted deliciously with the darker colour of the evergreen oak and the semi-blackness of the ancient pines. The lofty white peaks of the distant snow-covered Himalayas * formed a background whose equal can be found in no other quarter of the world. As they watched in silence, a lieutenant of dragoons and a captain of their own regiment hurriedly strode up.

"What is this I hear, Russell?" demanded the captain. "You've just escaped one deadly peril and now you've contrived to fall into a still greater danger. Could you not keep from quarrelling the first day you are free?"

"What has he been up to now?" enquired Lieutenant Knowles.

* From 'Hima'—snow, and 'alaya'—abode.

"Lieutenant Braddish has asked me to act as his second in an affair with this youngster," interposed the dragoon officer. "It seems that he has been insulted and called a liar. I refused to act against anyone under twenty years of age, and others have also refused. Ensign Russell, can you not withdraw? It seems that you have used very harsh terms, and Braddish is the best shot and best swordsman in the whole division. He is a noted duellist, and I am afraid that he is somewhat of a bully."

Ensign Dorricot came to his friend's assistance and narrated the events of the morning. Chancing to glance towards Philip Carruthers, Frank noticed a savage smile come into his eyes. "Oh! oh!" he thought "so you've been shamming forgiveness, you hypocrite!"

"Well done, Russell!" exclaimed Knowles, patting him on the back, as Frank concluded. "Wise or unwise, you acted like a man."

"That alters the case entirely," Captain Jackson declared. "I'm sorry I blamed you just now; you did quite right."

"I agree with you," affirmed the dragoon; "but unfortunately, that will not make him any the better able to cope with Braddish. I don't see what is to be done."

"Can we not let General Martindell or the old man * know?" suggested an ensign. "They would soon put a stop to the business. Could not *you* stop it, Captain Jackson?"

* This is the irreverent term by which the colonel is denoted in his regiment.

"I'm afraid not, and as to informing our chiefs—well, that's against all the rules. Would any of you fellows have informed the masters at school in order to prevent a fight?" said the Captain, shaking his head,

"Let it stand; I'll take the consequences," interrupted Jack. "I don't want the cad to think that I funk him."

"Well, you're not deficient in pluck," commented the dragoon officer.

At this moment the tall form of the bully Braddish, appeared in sight, accompanied by one or two other officers. He at once accosted Jack.

"I'm sorry, sir, that none of these gentlemen will act as my second. They all think that your youth should excuse your impertinence and they ask me to overlook it. I entirely disagree with them and have no intention of so doing. A second is not an absolute necessity; will you fight me without; there will doubtless be several present to see fair play?"

Jack bowed and tried to appear cool and unconcerned.

"I am at your service," he replied.

"You have choice of weapons," his adversary courteously informed the ensign.

"Rapiers, if anyone has them," decided Jack.

"Very good. How will 6 o'clock to-morrow morning suit; beneath that banyan *tope*?" asked Braddish.

The junior officer agreed, and his opponent turned to go.

"Lieutenant Braddish," called out Knowles in a

very quiet level tone of voice. "One moment! You seem to be well versed in all that appertains to duelling. Can you answer me this? Suppose that either of you two now received a still more deadly insult than the one over which you are about to fight. A challenge would of course follow; now which quarrel should be decided first?"

"I really do not know; I have never heard of such a case," was the astonished reply.

"Does any one present know?" repeated Knowles.

All professed ignorance.

"Now, I think that the insult last received should be dealt with first, particularly if the insult and quarrel be much greater. Do you not agree?" continued the young lieutenant of the 162nd.

"Well," replied the staff-officer, "probably you are right; I daresay it would be so, but you must excuse me as I have more urgent matters to attend to."

"Oh no, my dear sir," went on Knowles, blandly, "this is the most pressing business with which you have to deal just now."

Every man present looked up, wondering greatly; but without heeding the glances of astonishment, Knowles calmly continued, his eyes fixed on the toe of his boot which he tapped with a cane as he spoke.

"Lieutenant Braddish, Ensign Russell implied that you were a dishonourable man and a liar. I tell you plainly before everyone present, that you are a coward and a cur as well as a liar. It will be a dishonour to cross blades with you, but I intend to

incur that disgrace. Do you quite understand?" he calmly continued, as Braddish, greatly taken aback, started, and grew red as a turkey-cock, whilst the remainder of his audience held their breath in bewilderment, amazed at the audacity and equally amazed at the calm dreamy tone of the young lieutenant, who spoke as though he were making some casual remark of little importance or interest, rather than dropping a thunderbolt in their midst. Still dreamily tapping his boot, he went on:

"Yes, a liar, a cur, a dishonourable bully, a coward and a disgrace to the British army. If that is not sufficient, I'm afraid I shall have to get up and smite you across the face. I trust you will not put me to that trouble."

"What weapon do you choose?" asked Braddish, savagely; then turning to the dragoon officer, he continued: "Will you be my second in this affair; that fellow is of age, though he'll never live to be twenty-five."

"Rapiers," replied Jack's champion. "Please be his second, we may as well do things properly. Will you be mine, Jackson? Thanks! Please arrange everything,—the sooner the better."

The spectators could not understand; Lieutenant Knowles had always shown himself averse to quarrelling and was not easily aroused or insulted. He was a rather short, slight man of about twenty-three, with delicate clear-cut features and a grave, thoughtful expression. He had no reputation whatever as a swordsman, and nothing was more unexpected than his interference.

"Plucky fellow!" whispered an officer to Captain Jackson. "He must be doing this to save young Russell. He knows that if he himself is killed or badly wounded, the second duel will never be allowed to take place. It's splendid of him to save the lad in this way."

Our two ensigns were in terrible distress, but they were powerless. It was too late now to save their champion, though Jack begged Knowles to reconsider his decision, and expressed his contrition for having brought this to pass.

"Well, what would you have me do?" enquired the young lieutenant, smiling. "Shall I apologize to your friend Braddish?"

The boy was silent; greatly puzzled. At length he spoke.

"No, but I will; I can't have you killed in my quarrel; they say that he's a splendid fencer. Oh, it must be stopped!"

"Please don't apologize on my account, young 'un. Cheer up! he hasn't killed me yet. Probably the man's not so bloodthirsty as you think;—we must hope for the best. If you do apologize, remember that it will make no difference in my quarrel. I simply can't stand the fellow."

So the boys left, little comforted by this assurance. At an early hour on the following morning, the dozen or more officers, who had heard of the affair, had foregathered by the banyan *tope* or group of trees. The preparations were soon completed; Braddish and Knowles faced one another, small sword in hand and jackets off.

"I shall be very sorry to kill you or injure you badly," observed the former quietly and sneeringly. "Say you are sorry and I let you off."

"Please don't be disturbed on my account, Lieutenant Braddish. Rest assured that if you do injure me greatly your sorrow will be less than mine," was the ironical reply. "On Guard!"

The spectators were confirmed in their fears when they perceived the respective attitudes. For Braddish stood "on guard" in the regulation posture as taught by the foremost *maîtres d'armes* in England, whereas Knowles assumed a most surprisingly free and easy position. With right foot advanced nearly two feet and pointing straight towards his adversary, knee perpendicularly above the instep, the left heel in line with the right foot, but pointing at right angles to it, the weight of the body resting equally between both legs, the right elbow close to the body, the rest of the arm out, the hand a little below the right breast, the point of the sword at the height of the eyes, the left arm half stretched out behind and curved, he coolly awaited the onslaught of his formidable adversary.

"What a curious position!" whispered one of the officers, himself a good fencer.

"I'm afraid he knows little about this sort of thing," opined another.

"Right or wrong, it's a splendidly balanced position," murmured a third, "splendidly balanced! Look how the body sits freely on the legs, and how the left arm balances the right!"

The blades crossed and the onlookers shivered

as Braddish savagely but skilfully opened the attack with a straight thrust, which Knowles managed to parry. Again the steel jangled and yet again, but each time the attempts were foiled. Then Braddish, seeing that victory would be less easy than he had anticipated, made a feint and purposely laid himself open to attack, Knowles either declining or not daring to take advantage of the opening. Once more the rapiers crossed, and this time the bully's weapon ran up the other with a grating scraping noise. It was an attempt to disarm his opponent, but like the other efforts it failed. Knowles's face was absolutely imperturbable and gave no sign either of heat or of anxiety, whilst on the countenance of the taller man a vicious, disappointed rage clearly showed itself.

Braddish now changed his tactics, appearing tired and giving ground, so Knowles lunged once or twice with no more success than had crowned his opponent's attempts, but his counter parries were as safe as ever.

The spectators began to breathe more freely—the antagonists were more equally matched than any had dared to hope. They all saw that Braddish had at last discerned that no liberties could be taken with his slighter adversary, who contented himself with parrying the other's rapid and skilful thrusts, rarely making an offensive movement.

Our two ensigns looked on with anxious eyes and beating hearts. They had expected the combat to be sharp and swift; and now hope and excitement held them breathless. Perhaps their champion might

survive after all! They could hardly follow the wonderful play of the swords so completely were their nerves unstrung, and they shivered with dread at each fiery forward lunge when it seemed as though Braddish's point must pierce their friend's breast, and at every subtle feint and quick wary withdrawal of the blade, preparatory to a still more deadly lunge.

But the young lieutenant's eyes were calm and alert. Never permitting themselves to rest on the opponent's sword, they remained fixed on his face, following every thought and divining every cunning device and subtle trick before his hand had moved. Knowles' left foot had as yet hardly stirred throughout the encounter, whereas Braddish had stepped backwards and forwards in the hope of enticing his foeman to attack.

Ten minutes passed and not a scratch had been given, not a drop of blood had been shed; but it seemed obvious now that the taller man was becoming distressed and labouring in his breath. Calmly but cautiously Lieutenant Knowles began to press, when suddenly the bully's tactics changed and he made once again a furious and determined onslaught. And again he met that impregnable defence! Knowles had seen the intention in the man's eyes and was not deceived by the trick of pretended fatigue. Hardly seeming to move body or arm, his blade met and caught the other at every turn—only the wrist moving slightly in obedience to the eye; but those slight turnings of the flexible wrist, which seemed so little and so beautifully easy, meant life or death to him, and soon the bully began

to see that they would ere long mean life or death to him also. Even the lads, nervously anxious as they were, could not but note the change of expression that had gradually come upon the face of Lieutenant Braddish. The first glare of vindictive triumph had given way to a look of angry surprise as he found that the end was likely to be less easy than he had expected. Then an expression of doubt had stolen over his countenance, as not only his most fiery thrusts, but also his wiles and most tempting feints had been met and baffled in the same calm way. Not once had he been near to breaking down his opponent's guard; not once had that wrist of steel failed to parry his most skilful thrusts and *ripostes*. Doubt in its turn had given place to apprehension, for he could not fail to see that, whereas he himself had exhausted the limits of his skill and every trick he knew had been nullified by Knowles, the latter had as yet hardly attacked at all, and the bully was in ignorance of his methods and science. And now fear—real fear—mingled with this apprehension, for Braddish was becoming tired, and Knowles had not turned a hair;—his eye was as alert as ever and his hand as sure and steady.

Five minutes passed, five minutes of further jangling and clashing and slithering, of fiery lunges and lightning-like withdrawals; the breathing was becoming more heavy and feet were shuffling with less spring than before; the bully's attacks were feebler and less skilful.

Then occurred a change. Knowles lunged forward; Braddish just contrived to parry, but attempted no

return. With a light tap on his opponent's blade the younger man seemed to paralyse his adversary for an instant, his blade ran up that of Braddish with a quick scraping grating noise, and the bully's sword flew out of his tired grasp. Knowles lowered his point and waited. Braddish, white as a sheet, stooped, picked up his weapon and placed himself on guard. His nerve was gone!

The officer of the 162nd resumed the attack. Over and over again he appeared to have his antagonist at his mercy, but the blade would flash back, rapidly withdrawn and a fresh method of attack employed, until the parries became feebler and feebler and Braddish's guard was utterly broken down. Death stared him in the face and he knew it. Indeed, he tasted the bitterness of death not once, but many times that early morning; perspiration rolled down his brow, his eye was wild, and his face haggard and drawn. Again his sword slid along the grass!

The spectators looked at each other and more than one trembled. The young lieutenant, the point of his rapier resting on the ground, calmly waited as though he were the least interested person present. When Braddish resumed it was apparent to everyone that he was now little better than a third-rate fencer, so completely was his nerve gone. However, pulling himself together for a final effort, he lunged. Knowles parried beautifully; then, without moving foot or body, he thrust rapidly as his opponent was extended on the lunge. Like a streak of lightning, the steel, quitting the adversary's sword after the

parry with a smart distinct click, struck the bully's shirt just over the heart, and like a second flash was plucked away again. The linen was pierced, but no blood ran forth. The spectators held their breath—some gasped. An audible sigh of relief passed down their ranks on beholding the staff-officer still standing, dazed but apparently uninjured, his face of a ghastly pallor, his knees trembling, and the great body tottering as though about to faint. Knowles calmly waited for his adversary to recover. Moved by a sudden impulse, Braddish threw his sword on the ground with a gesture of sullen despair, as though abandoning all hope and preferring to save his life thus ignominiously rather than face death again. A revulsion of shame at his cowardice, however, prompted him to pick up the weapon and again place himself on guard.

"Gentlemen, this must be stopped,—it can't go on," interrupted his second, the dragoon lieutenant, with white scared face. "It's cruel; it's terrible! Captain Jackson, I'm sure your man has no wish to continue and will be satisfied. There must be no further fighting. I know I'm not acting properly in saying this," he concluded, pausing to take breath.

Jack's champion whispered to his second, and Captain Jackson replied:—

"The matter is entirely in your hands: my man has no wish to fight and never had. If Lieutenant Braddish considers that satisfaction has been given him, the matter may end."

Drops of perspiration stood out on the bully's

forehead; he trembled visibly as his second took him on one side. At length the dragoon spoke.

"I am glad to state that Lieutenant Braddish considers he has received satisfaction and is content to let the affair drop."

"Lieutenant Knowles is also anxious that the matter should end here," replied Captain Jackson. "Of course your man quite understands how to cause a renewal of hostilities should he so desire?"

The dragoon bowed. The only sign the bully gave that he understood this threat was that his ashen countenance assumed a darker hue and for an instant took on a lowering expression. But the deadly pallor soon overspread his face once more.

The group surrounded the wonderful fencer to congratulate him.

"H'm," observed one, "that brute won't carry his head so high in future."

"No," agreed another, "he quite understood your threat. I guess he'll take good care not to quarrel with any more youngsters while you're here, Knowles."

"Knowles, old man, where on earth did you pick up your swordsmanship, and why have you kept it so quiet?"

"Oh," replied the hero of the day, blushing, but not ill-pleased with the sensation he had made, "I always liked fencing as a boy, and I had probably the best master the world has ever seen."

"Indeed, and who was he?"

"The Frenchman Bertrand," replied the victor.

"Was it he who taught you that position for 'on guard'?"

"Certainly! That position will be adopted by everyone ten years hence: it's so perfectly natural and easy. You are quite free either for attack or defence."

"And what do you call that last thrust made,—when you parried *quarte* and then thrust in *quarte?*" asked the dragoon officer.

"Oh, that's Bertrand's invention,—the *riposte du tac-au-tac.* He termed it so from the clicking sound made as you quit the steel. It's just about the most deadly thrust there is," replied the lieutenant of the 162nd, smiling and well-pleased.

"This is the first duel I've ever seen," commented another, "and I hope to goodness it will be the last. Thank heaven that duelling is going out of fashion,—the brutal, murdering custom!"

The wish was echoed by all present, and the group dispersed.

CHAPTER XIII

JASPAO TURNS UP AGAIN AND GIVES "GOOD HUNTING"

By some means or other the story of the duel reached the ears of General Martindell. He sent for Ensign Russell, heard his account, and required the presence of Lieutenant Knowles, whom he congratulated, and of Braddish, whom he dismissed from his staff. He, moreover, informed the ensign that he had acted rightly in refusing to let fall even a hint that might harm the Jytak garrison, and, assuring him that he was in honour bound not to fight against his friends there, he despatched him to General Ochterlony's force, with a note that explained the reasons for the transfer.

Ochterlony's army lay a few days' journey to the north-west, and the country between was thought to be quiet, for the Garhwalis and other races of this hill country had no sympathy with the Gurkhas, who had conquered portions of their territory and killed those who had resisted. There was an unmistakeable mountain track, and our hero was pleased to learn that a sergeant and a dozen men of the Tipperary Fusiliers, who had lately arrived in camp as escort for some ammunition carts, were to accompany him,—or rather that he was to accompany them on their return to their regiment.

However, the arrangements made for an early start next morning came to nothing. All hope of taking Jytak at present had been abandoned, and the army lay inactive. The Gurkhas were so weak in numbers, and they had suffered so severely in the assaults that no one considered an attack by them as possible. For this reason an outpost that had been guarding the left rear of the British camp, was withdrawn on the day following Jack Russell's return. This post was the farthest from the Gurkha stronghold, and as there was no water in the immediate vicinity, it was now considered quite unnecessary to put up with this inconvenience any longer. With any other enemy there could have been no fear of so reckless and so daring a move as an attempt to rush the camp. But with Gurkhas the step proved a dangerous one.

Jack was awakened by the rousing notes of the *Alarm*. He sprang to his feet, buckled on his sword and rushed out to find the whole camp in confusion. Bewildered sergeants were turning out their men, swearing at the laggards, and giving confused orders: captains and lieutenants were shouting at the sergeants, and Colonel Gregory and Major Brooks were running to the spot to urge and hasten the company officers. Men, half awake and half-dressed, heavy and sullen, were falling in by companies whilst the musket reports on their left increased in volume, telling of desperate fighting in that quarter.

A few moments later the men of the 162nd were doubling to join in the fray, and racing after them

from the right of the encampment came company after company of the 53rd and detachments of the sepoys.

"Here they come. Ready!" sang out the captain of the leading company.

A mob of dim figures without order or discipline was charging straight for the 162nd. The front company was about to greet them with a deadly fusillade when a sergeant screamed:

"Don't fire, sir, it's the sepoys!"

"Open out, lads; let them through."

Scores of the flying sepoys burst through the ranks of the Englishmen, and behind them raced the victorious Gurkhas, cutting down the beaten Hindus as they ran, the shouts of triumph almost drowning the shrieks of the poor wretches. Our fellows could not fire by volleys for fear of hitting their own men, so mixed up were sepoys and Gurkhas, and for a space the steady ranks of the 162nd were shaken by the charge. Bayonet then clashed against kukri, and as friend and foe became separated and sorted out, the 162nd were able to open fire. Still the dauntless Gurkhas pressed home their charge, driving through the front rank of the British, who stood firm, however, silent and grim.

Then the 53rd came up and the Royal Irish Dragoons joined in the fray, and the Gurkhas were pressed back.

Suddenly a flame shot into the air, then another and another, and as quickly and as silently as they had come the Gurkhas vanished. The tents and stores of the two sepoy regiments that had been

rushed had been set on fire, and the arms and ammunition and a quantity of food had been carried off. The soldiers started off for the burning camp, to try to save as much as possible, but Colonel Gregory called them back.

"It's a trick," he said. "Keep away from the light or we shall make too good a target."

His advice was good. The Gurkhas were lying in wait, invisible to English eyes, hoping that their foes would advance where the blaze would show them up distinctly.

The attack had been as successful as unexpected. The sepoys had suffered nearly two hundred casualties, whereas not more than a score of Gurkhas' bodies could be found. Six hundred men were homeless and had lost nearly everything they had. In short, the camp would have to be removed at a greater distance from Jytak, and for the present the campaign must be given up.

General Martindell was very angry. He upbraided the officers of the sepoy regiment for their carelessness in keeping such a bad look-out, and said that he did not understand how the Gurkhas could have become aware so quickly that the outpost had been withdrawn. After a consultation with Colonel Gregory, he sent for Ensign Russell.

Jack entered the head-quarters tent and saluted.

"Ensign Russell, I understand that you received a messenger from one of the sons of Amar Sing yesterday, and that you sent him a communication?"

"Yes, sir."

"I suppose you were not so thoughtless as to mention that the outpost was withdrawn?"

"Certainly not, sir. He sent me a kukri-knife, and I simply wrote to thank him and to ask him to accept a present from me."

"Very good. I didn't doubt you."

"You know, sir, the Gurkhas are such good forest-rangers and scouts that they wander about at will. They seemed to know every fresh move as soon as it was made, sir."

"You may go. I believe you are right in saying that."

Shortly before noon our ensign set off with his Hibernian escort. Frank Dorricot was very loth to part with his chum so soon after his return, and greatly regretted that he could not accompany the small party. With his usual calmness he went so far as to apply for permission, but the cool request was refused.

"I say, Frank," Jack remarked as they parted. "I can't find that letter Jaspao sent me with the kukri. I'm certain I left it lying about the tent, but I couldn't put my hand on it this morning. I wish you would have a look for it, and if you do come across the thing, save it for me. I wish to keep it as a memento of Jytak."

"I'll have a good look round, old man. It would hardly be worth anyone's while to steal it, or that would be easy enough, you're such a careless beggar. Good-bye, old boy. Hope you'll have better luck under Ochterlony than we've had here."

"Good-bye, Frank. It's time the luck turned.

Take care of yourself and don't go near the fighting or into any danger, and mind you don't get your feet wet."

"Ugh, you beast! At any rate I shan't get kidnapped by a little Gurkha half my size. Ta-ta."

Jack found his Irish comrades very entertaining company. The sergeant, a war-scarred veteran, had served under Sir John Moore at Corunna, and on the way he told the young officer stories of that campaign and of the hero's glorious death. Jack mentioned the fact that his chum's father had fallen by the side of Moore, and it turned out that the sergeant had been in Major Dorricot's company. At least he said he had, but old Irish soldiers have picturesque memories, and had Jack told first that his own parent had also been on that glorious field, no doubt Sergeant Sullivan's memory would have enabled him to assert that he had served under Colonel Russell.

On the second day as they were resting after the evening meal, the old sergeant came forward with a petition.

"If ye plaze, sorr," he began, "the bhoys ud be likin' to do a little shootin' in the jungle here, if ye will allow ut, sorr. Shure there's no hurry at all, at all, and we've nothin' barrin' ourselves to look afther. Sorra one would be the worse av ut. Now, don't say nay, sorr," pleaded the old soldier in a tone that few could have been hard-hearted enough to resist.

"But what do the men want to shoot? And when? It's too late to-night."

"So ut is, sorr, so ut is. But to-morra mornin' early, sorr. And phwat is ut they're wishful to shoot? Why, there's peacockses, and pheasants, and chickory."

"What?"

"Chickories, sorr,—outlandish hill-partridges, I mane."

"Oh, I see. *Chickore?* Yes, and what else?"

"Why, sorr, there's deer, and"—here the sergeant lowered his voice and bent down to whisper,—"may be if the bhoys kept their ears open they might be seein' a leopard or a toiger hard by."

"Then the 'bhoys' had better leave it alone if they do. It's odds on the tiger when you go shooting with buckshot," remarked our ensign sagaciously.

But the sergeant so far forgot the difference in rank as to wink.

"The bhoys 'ull see to that same, sorr. Some av thim 'ull have bullets in the insides av their muskets, bedad will they so."

The required permission was given, and the youthful commandant promised to accompany the eager sportsmen.

On the following morning Jack was awakened at a very early hour by a noise of preparation, for the men were bestirring themselves long before sunrise in their eagerness to have good sport. A hasty breakfast was swallowed, powder and shot were distributed, and advice and admonition offered to the over-zealous. Never was a party of *shikarris* keener than these Irishmen!

The morning was delightfully fresh and cool and the scenery glorious. Range after range of magnificent hills, each appearing grander and more beautiful than the last, spread themselves before the travellers' vision, as another bend in the path was passed, or a new shoulder or eminence crossed. Very different was the aspect worn by nature from that of a few months ago when Jack passed through similar country near Jahi Tal with his chum, Frank Dorricot. Here wild flowers abounded and their scent was oppressive. Clinging to bushes and trees masses of the great white clematis, known as "The Traveller's Joy," hung in glorious tangles, and the hillside in front was one huge patch of brilliant red, the gorgeous flowers of the rhododendron. Real trees were these! not the mere shrubs we know at home. Wild pear-trees with their delicate white blossom, that in some places had fallen and now covered the ground with a carpet of snow, seemed more homelike though no less beautiful, whilst here and there the favourite English spring flowers,—wood-anemones, primroses and violets, marsh-marigolds, wild hyacinths, and forget-me-nots,—caused the excited lad to forget which continent he was in, and what danger lurked in the jungle but a short distance beyond.

Cuckoos had begun their call and the *costura,* or hill-thrush, was bursting into song; the wood-pigeons cooed to their gentle mates, and all seemed peaceful, serene, and homelike. But the dreams of England would be rudely shattered as a troop of monkeys suddenly bestirring themselves as they heard

the approach of a possible enemy, would swing from tree to tree, some seeming to play hide-and-seek, others simply staring at the unwelcome intruders. These were decidedly un-English.

Not many hours journey to the west lay a spot known as Simla.

Little dreamt those soldiers that this small place, lost among the mighty hills, would become the favourite residence of the English in India, the hills towards which the eyes of tired men and women are lifted up as soon as the hot weather begins its deadly work, and happy are they whose position enables them to reach this haven of rest, this sanctuary from the ravages of the Indian sun. At the date in which this story runs no place looked less like a future headquarters of the Indian Government.

Game appeared less plentiful than they had anticipated in the portion of jungle selected, so the party moved farther away from their route, crossing a slight ridge of wooded hill to a more open land beyond. As they crossed the highest point the ensign suddenly perceived something that caused him to pause.

"Lie down quickly," he called to his men and they at once obeyed.

"What is ut, sorr?" enquired the sergeant eagerly.

"Only some men approaching. I think they're Gurkhas."

"Glory!" shouted Private O'Grady. "How many may there be, sorr?"

"Four or five," Jack replied. "Keep down there

and be quiet, they're coming straight here and we'll have them all right if they don't see us."

The figures drew closer and closer. When they arrived within five hundred yards a low chuckle escaped from the boy, who was peering through the dense foliage of a clump of smaller rhododendrons.

"Faith, then, phwat's the matter now, sorr?" asked Sergeant Sullivan.

"Oh, it's only a friend of mine," Jack informed him, laughing. "I should know that walk at half a mile. We'll prepare a pleasant little surprise for him. Now mind, you men mustn't fire or injure anyone unless our lives are in danger. The man who's coming towards us captured me in this way a few months ago and he treated me like a Christian."

"An' is ut him? We've heard av that, sorr. Shure, we'll trate him loike a brother," laughed the sergeant.

"Well, stop there, and don't come out until I tell you."

Having given these instructions Jack crept forward and concealed himself behind some thick bushes, beside which the approaching foemen seemed likely to pass, and there he waited, his heart wildly palpitating, though a smile played on his face. The fusiliers chuckled quietly. The joke appealed to their Irish hearts.

"Faix! 'tis a cute gossoon is our bowld officer-boy," said Larry O'Grady. "Is it spakin' 'em fair he'd be afther, sargint, think ye, or frightenin' av them?"

"Whist! whist! Larry, ye Galway tinker, will you

always be waggin' that red rag av yours? Kape sthill, I bid ye."

"Arrah! sargint darlin', be aisy now. Sorra word more will I spake. But what might the little gineral be up to?"

Five men had reached and were rapidly passing the boy's hiding-place when he called out:

"Halt! Jaspao Thapa, son of Amar Sing."

The Gurkhas stopped dead, their fingers on trigger or kukri, surprised, yet showing no sign of fear.

"Who are you that orders me to halt?" demanded the Gurkha subadar, approaching the bushes whence the voice proceeded.

"I am Ensign Russell and ye are my prisoners. Ha! ha! Jaspao Thapa, the tables are turned. It is my turn to surprise thee now,—though I must say you show less sign of fear, old man, than I felt then."

"What, my little Russail Sahib!" shrieked the delighted Jaspao. "What are you doing here, my brother?"

"I am going to join the English army that is about to take Malaon," Jack coolly replied, "because I can no longer fight against Jytak. And whither art thou bound?"

"Ah! I am going to join the Gurkha army at Malaon that is about to vanquish your English army. My brother Ranjur has sent me to take care of our father and to carry news of the war to him."

"Have you a letter?" Jack demanded suddenly and savagely. "Give it me and I will not slay you, for we English do not kill brave men."

The Gurkha was not quick-witted enough to grasp at once the meaning of this abrupt change of tone. He stared, then recollecting the incident that first brought them together, he burst out laughing.

"Ha! ha!" laughed he. "Have mercy on us, we are only five to one. Do not slay us all."

He then continued:

"Our route is the same, brother, shall we not go together?"

"Do you mean as friends? I cannot be your prisoner again," the ensign made answer.

"As friends of course. We are not enemies until we rejoin our armies, then shall it be war betwixt thee and me, my English brother."

"Very good, Jaspao; now we are comrades. But see, I am not alone. Sergeant Sullivan, order out your men!"

The Irish fusiliers sprang to their feet and emerged from the hiding-place. Quick as thought, the Gurkhas' muskets leaped to their shoulders and their eyes blazed in sudden wrath.

"What is this, my brother?" Jaspao angrily demanded. "Thou shalt not make a prisoner of me,—rather will we fight and die. Are these friends or foes? If foes, let us fight and that quickly."

"Will you five fight a dozen men, friend Jaspao? For then you would surely die."

"Aye, a dozen or a score! Who fears death? *Kafar hunnu bhanda manru ramro* *."

"But better still is it not, neither to die nor to

* "It is better to die than to be a coward."

be a coward?" laughed the boy. "Think you, Jaspao Thapa, that I would fight you or take you prisoner after you had let me off just now when you believed that I was at your mercy?"

He then shouted in English to the soldiers:

"Sergeant Sullivan, these men are our friends and comrades, and we shall proceed together. There is no need to fear treachery with them."

"Shure, sorr, I know 'tis a gintleman we have to dale wid," replied the sergeant, and Jaspao greeted the Irish soldiers with a polite:

"*Ram, ram, sahibs.*"

"God save ye kindly, Misther Jaspao," Sullivan gave greeting in return. "I've hurrd tell av ye, sorr, as a mighty bowld sojer an' a dacent, obleegin' man, though a furriner."

Jack translated, and the face of his Nepalese friend showed how well he was pleased with the compliment.

So British and Gurkha warriors mingled freely together, and as the ensign thought fit to call a halt for a parley with his old acquaintance, the men sat down and were soon puffing away at pipes and cheroots like brothers-in-arms rather than deadly foes. Noticing that one of the little mountaineers had no cheroot, Larry O'Grady took the *dhudeen* from between his lips, wiped the short stem carefully, and handed the black clay pipe to him, saying:

"A pull at that 'ull do ye a power o' good, Misther Gurkha,—and no offence meant if caste should hindher ye."

But Gurkhas do not allow themselves to be bound by the iron rules of caste, and the man, who was

our old friend, Lalbir Burathoki, grinned his thanks, and after a few puffs returned the short *dhudeen* to its owner. They then took it in turns to pull at the clay and were soon as thick as thieves.

"Bedad!" Sullivan exclaimed with startling suddenness, as though he had made an amazing discovery. "Bedad! 'tis Oirish gossoons the Gurkhies is and not naygurs at all, at all. Obsarve the fizzonomy av them well, in shpite av their outlandish dhress. They're betther lookin' nor Galway men, too, Larry."

"Lave me and Galway be, sargint dear," the good-tempered Larry retorted. "Small blame to you ye were not borrn in a dacent counthry, me Tipperary jew'l,—by rayson ye were not axed to choose."

In the meanwhile the young officer explained to Jaspao what had brought them into the jungle.

"Ha!" exclaimed that little man. "Shooting? Why then, Russail Sahib, we will also be *shikarris* to-day, for I am in no hurry. But there are too many of us; we must divide our forces. Let some of our men stay hereabouts, and a few of us will go farther on, where I think we may find a tiger."

So Jack Russell invited Sergeant Sullivan and Larry O'Grady, who was known to be a very keen sportsman and a good shot, to accompany him, and Jaspao selected Lalbir Burathoki to complete the party. The remainder were instructed not to wander far from the spot where they now sat, as plenty of game might be found in the immediate neighbourhood, and they might shoot for the pot. The five hunters set off in the direction indicated by the

subadar, the talkative O'Grady attempting to carry on a conversation with his new chum.

"It's a rale gintleman your masther does be, Misther Lal Beer," he began.

Lalbir grinned, but understood not a word.

"And what for is all this war about?" he continued. "For sorra one av me knows."

Again Lalbir answered with a grin, protesting that he spoke no English.

"What's that ye say?" asked Larry, who imagined that his ears had caught the word 'rent'. "Ye could not pay the rint, ye say? Oh, wirra! wirra! to think that the Tipperary Fusiliers should iver fall so low as to be the instruments av wrongful oppreshun on the side av the brutal landlords!"

"And did they lave you the pig?" he enquired after a short silence. "Or was that dishtrained and all?"

Lalbir shook his head to intimate that he did not understand. Larry, however, interpreted the gesture as an admission that 'the gintleman that pays the rint' had been taken from him.

"Faix! we're in the same boat then," he said. "And so, bein' Irish, I turned sojer to fight for the King av England, that had ruinated me home."

"It's quare," added Larry, seeing that the Gurkha made no attempt to reply, "it's quare that we are both in throuble over the rint."

Lalbir grinned the Gurkha grin and shook his head, so Larry left him in disgust and complained to the sergeant of the fellow's reticence.

"Arrah, sargint darlin'," he said, "the Gurkhies may be good sojers, but they're not convarsible

men. Divil a word could I get from Lal Beer, thry as I would. It's only ignorant, pagan haythen they are afther all, wid little sinse in their numskulls."

"Oh, shut your face, Larry jew'l," Sullivan replied. "Will ye always be waggin' that consayted tongue av yours? If they do not undherstand outlandish Galway spache, do ye not see they are more knowledgable in the jungle than us? There's a differ in the language we spake and that's why he cud not answer you. Did ye niver hear tell of the Tower of Babelon and how the poor furriners lost the dacent spache there, and were obligated to talk nonsinse for to undherstand one another? Did they not larn you jogriphy nor yet histhry in Galway?"

"Whist! whist! sargint dear," Larry replied, lowering his voice to an excited whisper. "Who's waggin' his red rag now and scarin' the bastes? Look at my little frind Lal Beer; he's come acrost somethin' down be the wather."

The Gurkha soldier had stopped by the bed of a stream, and was stooping down and whispering to his officer in the Magar tongue. The Europeans could see nothing at first until Jaspao pointed out some indistinct footmarks slightly impressed on the damp ground close by the water, and then even our inexperienced ensign recognized the pugs of one of the great cats, leopard, panther, or tiger.

"Shure, it's a toiger," declared the sergeant. "All the years I've bin in Injia I've never shot a toiger but wance, and thin it was only a leopard. Be careful, Larry darlin', or he'll be afther makin' a male av ye. Ye're a tinderer morsel nor me."

THE REPORT RANG OUT AS SHE HUNG IN MID-AIR.

p. 166.

"Nay, sargint, we must kape forninst our officer; he's the tinderest av us, and maybe the tiger 'ull lave us alone."

"It's a panther!" exclaimed the subadar in an excited whisper. "Look how they cross; this is his drinking-place, and he has a kill close by. Keep your eyes open, he has not long left here."

Both the little Nepalese eagerly followed the trail through the tall jungle-grass that closed over their heads. Every man of the party was very much on the alert. Suddenly, as the grass became rather open, the Gurkhas stopped and looked upwards, directing the gaze of their companions towards a number of vultures circling in the air, their hungry attention evidently fixed on some spot beneath them and close at hand.

"See, they are waiting for him to finish! He is still feeding," explained Jaspao.

Slowly, and warily creeping forward, they soon discovered their quarry standing over the half-eaten carcase of a deer. His head was raised and turned towards them, for in spite of his pre-occupation, he had sniffed the taint in the air. For a moment he stood at a loss,—a noble picture—fiercely growling, unwilling to retreat, yet not daring to attack. With a true sportsman's instinct, the Nepalese subadar, remembering that he himself had already enjoyed hunting in plenty and that the English boy had never killed anything so dangerous as a panther, motioned to Jack to shoot. The ensign quickly brought his firearm to his shoulder and let fly. The bullet struck the panther full in the chest and rolled

him over, but the beast rapidly rallied, and, uttering a scream of rage, sprang at the hunters. The guns of the sergeant and the Gurkha private rang out simultaneously, followed quickly by the report of the other Irishman's musket and the panther dropped lifeless.

"Look out!" sang out Jaspao, just in time.

A loud angry roar, apparently from under their feet, made the Englishman jump to one side, and even the sergeant, war-worn and war-scarred veteran though he was, gave a start of alarm. That jump probably saved Jack Russell's life. The panther maddened by the loss of her mate took no account of the odds against her, but sprang, without a second's hesitation, at the nearest of the murderers. This chanced to be the ensign. None of the muskets was loaded save that of Jaspao Thapa—fortunately he was the best shot of the party. Hardly had the panther commenced her spring before his gun was at his shoulder; the report rang out as she hung in mid-air, and the splendid brute dropped, never to rise again, for the bullet, directed by the keen sight and steady nerves of the little *shikarri* had entered behind the powerful shoulder and reached a vital part.

She lay on the ground screaming with rage and pain, clawing furiously at earth and air until the Gurkha soldier, coolly and adroitly avoiding the strokes of those vicious claws, plunged his knife into her heart. Jack gave a gasp of relief as the furious animal shuddered and became still.

The sight was a dreadful one. Though the panther seemed possessed of devils and the very picture of

blind hatred, cruelty and fury, yet he could not help pitying the beast, for had not they begun the quarrel, and had she not some ground for hatred?

He soon consoled himself, however, with the remembrance of the damage done to cattle and the loss of human life even, inflicted by these creatures, and with the reflection that no one would regret their death, but, instead, many dwellers in the forest would henceforward live the more securely.

CHAPTER XIV

"LO, I WILL STAND AT THY RIGHT HAND"

AN hour later the Gurkhas again became excited, and pointing out certain marks on the ground, explained that these were the spoor of an elephant.

"A lone elephant!" exclaimed Jaspao. "Probably a rogue, and if so we must be careful, for when *Hathi** is angry he is more dangerous than any panther or even tiger."

The spoor led to some marshy ground in which the hunters eventually sighted the object of their search at a distance of less than five hundred yards.

"Careful!" whispered the *subadar*. "His sight and scent are wonderful. Which way does the wind blow?"

With regard to this simple matter they all differed, for there was hardly a breath of air. So Jaspao looked around until he found a flower with down like that of the dandelion, and this he tossed into the air, and watched the direction in which it gently floated whilst falling.

* *Hathi* is the Hindustani for "elephant." The name will be recognized by all who have read Mr. Kipling's wonderful "Jungle Book", and if there be any boys—readers of this story—who are not acquainted with those delightful tales—well, they cannot imagine what they have missed. "*Hathi*" is pronounced "*uttee*" by the English soldiers in India, and this pronunciation is not very wide of the mark.

"Musha! that bangs Banagher!" whispered O'Grady to the sergeant. "But the little naygur does be up to a thrick or two. Did ye iver see the like?"

"Whist! Larry, ye thafe av the wurrld! Kape quite, ye vagabone, or ye'll frighten the onruly bhaste. Look at the big ears av him."

"Bedad! then, sargint, he's no betther nor a Hindu elephint, and for all his big ears he cannot understand English at all. So what's the throuble if he does be hearin' us?"

"English! Be the powers, *you* purtend to shpake English! Well, that bates all. A dark * man cud tell that ut's the ould counthry you hail from, Larry, afore you had shpoke tin wurrds. It bates me intirely why no Galway garron can iver shpake dacent English. But whist! darlin', we must follow the Gurkhy and go circumspect the bhaste."

"Follow me. This way!" Jaspao whispered, quivering with excitement; and with greater caution even than before, they crept forward up wind, through tall reeds and stunted bushes until they had approached within two hundred paces. At this distance the elephant's keen scent informed him that danger threatened. He flourished his trunk, recognizing some taint in the air, but not knowing what to make of it until he at length caught sight of the ensign who was not fully concealed. With hoarse, angry trumpetings and shrill screams the furious beast charged down upon his stalkers.

* "Blind"

At fifty paces Lalbir and Larry could restrain themselves no longer, and they pulled trigger upon the black mass of fury that was rushing towards them. The infuriated pachyderm never checked his pace for a second. Sergeant Sullivan now followed, sending a bullet into his forehead, and this brought the rogue to his knees. But, merely stunned for a moment, he quickly rose, and Jaspao, motioning Jack to preserve his fire, sprang to one side and aimed behind the monster's huge ear, again tumbling him to the ground.

Believing that this time he was done for, Lalbir Burathoki, who had just finished reloading his musket, dashed up to give him a finishing shot, when the elephant, with terrible screams of rage and pain, rose and rushed upon him.

The Gurkha, who was almost beneath the animal as he rose to his feet, brought his firearm to his shoulder, but the sight of the furious monster, tail on end and trunk high in the air above him—almost over his head,—somewhat unnerved the brave lad, and his bullet merely entered the chest. Too excited to feel the sting of this fresh wound, the *uttee* twisted his trunk round the man's legs and hurled him to the ground. Lalbir lay where he fell, and the great beast again made for him. Jaspao's presence of mind did not desert him; he flung his round cap at the elephant's eye, hoping thus to attract his attention, but to no purpose, and the trunk was once more wound round the wretched Lalbir.

The subadar did not know what fear was. Determined to save his comrade's life at all costs, he in

turn ran at the beast, with uplifted kukri, and slashed at the cruel trunk, almost dividing it in two, then sprang away. With a shrill scream of pain the rogue left his victim and turned upon his new assailant; but Jack, who had saved his shot and had been dodging about trying to obtain a good position during the two or three seconds that had elapsed since the man had been caught, was now by his side. The maddened brute was only a few paces away; the lad took aim at the centre of the hollow just above the trunk, and pulled the trigger. It was the exact spot. The bullet buried itself in the brain and, though the impetus carried him a few paces forward, he fell on the spot where the ensign had just been standing. This time there was no room for doubt; the elephant was indeed dead.

"Well aimed, Russail *Bahadur!*" cried the subadar. "Fortunate was it for one of us that you had saved that shot. Let us look to my poor lad."

The injured Gurkha lay on the ground, unconscious, but by no means dead. A leg and collar-bone were broken, he had received many minor injuries and was badly bruised, but would certainly recover. They at once carried Lalbir back to the spot where the others had been left, and whilst the meal was being prepared, the sergeant, an old campaigner who had learned many things during his long service, dressed the injuries and roughly set the broken bones.

In the early evening, after a midday rest, the party once more moved forward towards Malaon, first cutting off the elephant's tusks, which were of

considerable value. The two officers decreed that these should be sold and the money divided equally between all the nineteen. A number of bearers from the nearest village were hired to convey the wounded Gurkha back to General Martindell's camp, and Jack wrote a note to Surgeon White explaining the circumstances. He then informed the coolies that they would be well paid by the doctor if they delivered their charge quickly and safely, but otherwise they would receive nothing, and the bearers prepared to depart.

"Jabers! bhoys, phwat's the matter now? Auld Nick's afther him—no less!" exclaimed O'Grady, with a gasp of surprise.

The ensign looked up, as a man with scared face, and eyes starting from their sockets, came running towards them, almost dropping with the exertion and very evidently in a state of abject terror.

"Quick! Quick!" he screamed to the *lambardar* or headman of the village, who had provided the coolies and now stood by. "Let us fly whilst there is yet time. Call the village together, brothers, and let us fly."

"Why, Ram Kishan Bisht, are the demons pursuing thee?" asked Pirthi Chand, the headman.

"Worse than that! worse than that!" was the reply, and there was no mistaking the pure terror in the man's tone and looks as he continued: "The Tigers of the Black Mountain will be here in two hours and we shall be slain and tortured, our wives and cattle taken away, and our houses burnt. Let us escape with our wives and children while yet there is time."

The fright of the runner now infected the countenance of the headman and of the coolies: the alarm was swiftly carried through the village, and in a few moments the inhabitants were collecting their poor valuables and otherwise preparing for flight.

"What is the matter?" enquired Jack of the headman. "What does he mean by 'the Tigers of the Black Mountain'?"

"They are demons in the form of men," answered Pirthi Chand; "they rob and murder through all the country from here to Peshawur, and their delight is to look on at the torture they inflict. Four years ago they raided the village of Mansur, barely twenty miles from here, and because the people of Mansur resisted, the 'Tigers' set fire to the houses and threw all the armed men into the flames. Then they cut off the lips, noses and hands of the rest,—men, women and children. And they will do the same to us except we make haste."

Though our hero had by this time become almost accustomed to look on death and wounds, he shuddered at the picture that had been drawn.

"But who are they?" he asked. "What race of men, and how is it the Government does not exterminate them?"

"The two whom we call 'The Tigers' are two Pathan brothers from the Black Mountain," replied Pirthi Chand, who appeared to be an unusually intelligent and well-informed man. "Most of their followers are Pathans from that country, but a number are Sikhs and a few Rohillas. The Great Company has sent men out against them, but three years

ago they destroyed a force of two hundred sepoys who were despatched to catch the raiders, and whom the 'Tigers' entrapped in the hills so that but seven escaped to tell the tale. But they seldom show themselves on the White Man's territory; generally they raid in the Punjab where no man can be called master, or in Kashmir and along the border, and now they are here because no one knows whether we Garwhalis belong to the Great Company or to Nepal, and neither the English nor the Gurkha army can spare a man to look after robbers. And so we must suffer! But let us flee; come with us, you cannot remain here."

Ensign John Collingwood Russell looked at Subadar Jaspao Thapa, and the Gurkha gazed back upon the Englishman.

"You heard what he has said, subadar?" asked our hero.

"Surely I heard, sahib," was the Gurkha's reply.

"What will be the strength of these 'Tigers'?" Jack enquired of the headman.

"They will number from fifty to seventy, sahib," answered the man who had brought the bad news. They have divided into two bands, and the strongest numbers more than half a hundred."

The ensign again looked at the subadar. Jaspao smiled a broad, contented smile, nodded, and said simply:—"We are eighteen; it will be very fine. I am glad that Lalbir Burathoki was injured by the elephant, or we might not have come here; then should we have missed this."

Jack looked towards Sergeant Sullivan—the only

man of the Fusiliers who could follow the conversation,—and said:

"Do you agree with the subadar, sergeant?"

"Do Oi, sorr? An' phwat d'ye take me for, sorr?" was the quick response. "Do ye think, sorr, that if them Gurkhies does be willin' to fight, an Oirishman 'ull be backward in comin' forward. Be Saint Pathrick, a jewel of a foight 'twull be."

Our ensign was pleased—this was just what he wanted. He had not liked to risk his men against such tremendous odds without the approval of both the sergeant and the Gurkha subadar, but seeing that these were equally delighted at the prospect of breaking up the robber-band, his heart was filled with joy. The headman, on the contrary, looked dumbfounded.

"You cannot fight the Tigers of the Black Mountain," he exclaimed. "Ram Kishan said truly that they are demons, for each is as strong as three men. They will kill you all without mercy – and they will do it slowly. Be wise and escape with us."

"Don't be alarmed, my good Pirthi Chand: we are going to kill them *quickly* unless they yield," Jack replied, "and you must help us. Bring all your fighting men together, collect your weapons, and we will show you what to do. To-night shall we teach these 'Tigers' a lesson."

The villagers had now assembled and were impatient to be off. With one voice they denounced the madness of the Englishmen and Gurkhas who would dare oppose these terrible brigands.

"Let us be off!" they cried, "and these madmen may be killed if they wish. What is it to us, they are not of our blood?"

"It is this much to you," retorted Jack, hotly. "We offer to protect your houses, your goods and your cattle; and if only ye will be men and will help us, we shall rout this robber-band that ye dread so much."

"Haste, brothers, haste! Do not stay here talking; they will soon be upon us," screamed a man from the crowd.

"Shoot the kafars * down!" exclaimed Jaspao in disgust. "Or if the aid of these timid mice is of any use to us, we will make them stay and help. You cowards! stir from here if you dare until the young *sahiò* has given permission. You will find us worse than your precious Tigermen."

"I will stay and fight by your side," declared the *lambadar*, "though we shall surely be slain. Now, sahib, let the married men depart to save their wives and children and we will make the younger men remain."

"Nay, Pirthi Chand," the ensign replied. "All may go who wish, but let those remain who are not cowards."

"The white man talks foolishly!" cried a villager. "What is the use of being brave if you are slain,—rather let us save our lives. How can eighteen men prevail against three score, and the Tiger brothers can each slay six men, and bullets cannot hurt them?"

* Cowards.

Three young men placed themselves by the side of Pirthi Chand, and the remaining villagers moved rapidly away towards the hills amid the jeers of the Irishmen and Gurkhas. Sergeant Sullivan gave his opinion that the house of the headman would be the best post of defence. Not only was it larger and stronger than the others, but it also stood near the entrance by which the brigands were expected. In front were one or two houses which would most certainly be set on fire, but as these belonged to men who had fled, Jack felt that the loss would be deserved, and the flames would cast a light upon the marauding band, thus giving the defenders a better aim.

The ensign, the sergeant, the four villagers and seven fusiliers took up their position in the house, whilst Jaspao and his Gurkhas and the remaining five Irishmen occupied an adjoining building at right angles to Jack's post, whence a flanking fire could be poured into the robbers. As they waited Jack obtained further information concerning the history of this band of brigands and the terror with which they were regarded by their victims.

He had learnt by now the extent of the East India Company's dominions, and knew that they had no authority over the Punjab, the country to the west. There a long bitter struggle had been going on for many years, between a religious body known as "*Sikhs*" and the Pathans and other Mohammedans. The *Sikhs* had grown from a very small following of disciples * who, about two hundred

* Sikh means "disciple."

years before, had reverenced a certain religious teacher named Nanuk, and who might be termed a body of Hindu Protestants, into a powerful array of very fine fighters. After having suffered great persecution at the hands of the Mohammedans, they were now becoming too powerful for their former masters and were taking the Punjab from them. It followed that as the Mohammedans maintained that they owned that country and as the Sikh chieftains laughed at this, the land was wholly upset and there was little law or order. So brigandage prevailed unchecked, and both Sikhs and Pathans (races equally greedy) often forgot their mutual hatred in order to join hands in robbing other people.

Pathan is the name by which the fierce Mohammedan tribesmen of the hills along the North-West frontier of India are called. The Pathan tribes include Afghans, Afridis, Waziris, Swatis, Mohmands, Yusufzais and many other divisions of strong and warlike men who are still, at the beginning of the 20th century, continually waging war against the British.

CHAPTER XV.

"FACING FEARFUL ODDS"

AN hour passed very very slowly and the faint twilight had given place to night.

"It's weary waitin', your honour," sighed Larry, who was spoiling for a fight. "Is it comin' they'll be at all, think you, sorr? P'raps the bowld Paythans have cotched some av the naygur-men and have got wind av us?"

"We can only wait and see, Larry."

"Faix! we'll do that same. Sure 'tis like an eviction in ould Ireland, and we're waitin' for the military, though divil a dhrop of bilin' wather have we for to throw on their heads."

"Thrue for you, Larry jew'l," laughed the sergeant, "but if we are short av hot wather, shure we will not grudge 'em the cowld steel. The Toiger gintry will find the Tipperary Fusiliers a mighty obleegin' reg'ment in that respect as soon as we've bin introjuced."

Suddenly a noise in the building at the entrance to the village announced the presence of the outlaws, and before long a flame shot up, and then another, telling of the destruction of the houses. By the lurid light wild figures could be seen moving to and fro, looking eagerly for loot, but finding

little. Savage yells and exclamations told of their disappointment, and so close were they now that the remarks could be heard by the concealed soldiers. The headman touched our hero on the shoulder.

"Look! those are the Tigers of the Black Mountain," Pirthi Chand exclaimed in a tremulous whisper, that showed plainly how greatly he feared the robbers.

He pointed towards two tall stalwart Pathans who were raging in disappointed fury.

"O brother!" exclaimed the younger and bigger of the brothers, "would that I could catch the man who has told of our coming; I would flay him alive even if thou wert he."

The elder brother savagely answered: "They have taken everything with them—there is nothing to steal and no one to kill. May they be devoured by dogs! But we can burn the place down from one end to the other."

"Nur Muhammad, thou art ever too hasty," declared the first speaker. "Let us first search every house; they must have left something worth carrying off."

The speaker, a dark-visaged, black-bearded Pathan, over six feet three inches in height and strong in proportion, was pointed out to our ensign as the real chieftain of the gang, known to the people of the countryside as the "Black Tiger." Nur Muhammad, the elder brother, was an inch or two shorter, and though apparently strong and muscular, he had not the look of power possessed by the other. The expressions of both equally betokened their cruel, bloodthirsty nature.

The robbers approached the headman's house carelessly, for the idea of resistance never entered into their heads. At first they had proceeded with caution, quietly surrounding the village until it was found to be deserted. They then gave full vent to their fury at the failure of the anticipated surprise.

"Light some torches!" ordered the leader. "We'll see if there be not something in this house."

With flaming pine torches the outlaws came within twenty yards of the loop-holed walls that sheltered the ensign and his men, quite unconscious of the twelve muskets pointed in close proximity to their breasts and equally unaware of the nine others aimed from the right flank at little greater distance.

"Ready!" whispered Jack, quickly following the caution by the loud command "Fire!"

Twleve spurts of flame lit up the dark walls for an instant; one loud report was heard and a number of the brigands dropped. Some lay still in death, others writhed and moaned on the ground, and one or two crawled hastily into shelter. As the unexpected command in the English tongue was heard the desperadoes sprang back in surprise, but too late. The volley followed the command instantaneously! The two brothers unfortunately were untouched. Quickly reloading, Sullivan and a couple of soldiers managed to get in a second shot before all the enemy had reached shelter. Then silence reigned; not a sound was heard save the crackling of the flames.

"Man alive, kape yer head down, sorr," implored the sergeant as Jack persisted in looking

through the loop-hole, "they'll put some lead through there before long."

Obediently the ensign ducked. Well for him that he did, for six bullets flattened against the wall an instant later. No reply was made from the house: not a word or sign gave any indication of the number or character of the defending force. To say that the brigands were puzzled would be very inadequate—they were furious. And, moreover, they were somewhat frightened. They were not accustomed to resistance at all, so great was the terror of their name that all men fled at their approach.

To lose ten men at one volley,—in one half second!—in such a paltry village as this,—it was almost incredible, but there lay the men before them. And to be surprised in this manner! The Tigers of the Black Mountain were wont to surprise others, not to be caught themselves, and the two leaders glared savagely at one another as each waited for a chance to accuse his brother as the cause of the disastrous blunder. For they both knew well that their truculent band would be even harder to lead and much less inclined to obey orders after finding its chiefs guilty of so bad a piece of generalship.

The brigands muttered curses deep and long, swearing that every man, woman and child in that village should be put to death with the most horrible and prolonged tortures; and Pirthi Chand's three men trembled as they listened. For the 'Tigers' shouted aloud that the villagers might hear and be

afraid, that their hearts might melt at the thought of their certain fate and that they might attempt to fly. Unfortunately for the Tiger band they were not Garwhalis who listened, but Irishmen and Gurkhas.

"But," objected a Sikh raider, "what meant that command in the English tongue? If English soldiers are protecting the place we had better go."

"Bah! thou coward!" retorted Azi Mullah, the "Black Tiger." "What if they be English? They will not number more than we do, so let us slay the *Kafir* * dogs."

"There are no English here," Nur Muhammad confidently asserted. "'Twas some man who has learned his drill as a sepoy and who thinks to frighten us in this way. Let us wait and see."

After ten minutes had passed in dead silence, two or three of the raiders left their hiding-place and began to creep towards the house. All was black in front of them and they could hardly distinguish the building, though what seemed a deeper shade of blackness loomed thirty paces in front. In their savage desire for revenge they overlooked the fact that the burning dwellings gave them a lighter background. By the weird uncertain glare of the flames the dim forms were quickly perceived from the loopholes, and Sergeant Sullivan and his men prepared to fire;—their fingers were on their triggers, when Jack interposed.

"Wait!" he whispered very softly. "Wait until

* Infidel.

some more come out, and cover each man in turn."

One by one the robbers left the shelter of the walls to creep, flintlock and sword in hand, nearer to the building, and soon fifteen were worming their way along. There was no need to give the caution "Ready."

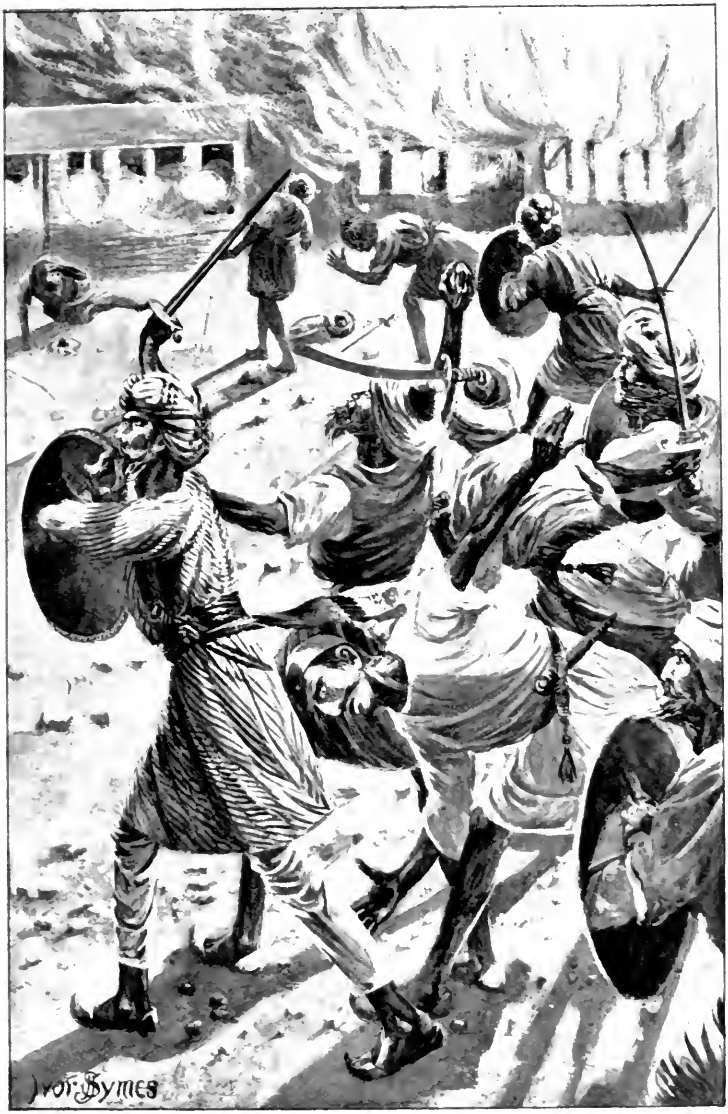
"Fire!" snapped the ensign, and again those twelve deadly spurts of flame were seen; and, as they saw, half a dozen of the assailants rolled over dead or dying, and the remainder fled back to shelter.

"How is this?" muttered a Yusufzai as he sank down by the wall and pressed his hand to his wounded leg. "How is this that we have lost nearly a score of men in this miserable hole, and have not yet found the value of a turban for our pains? We are fighting drilled soldiers, not villagers. Whose fault is this? What are our leaders doing?"

"Thou mutinous dog! Perchance 'tis thy fault. Thou hast sold the news of our visit to these swine.... Die!" And the Black Tiger plunged his knife up to the hilt in the grumbler's breast.

"Look ye!" continued Azi Mullah, "I am master here! That hound has betrayed us, but never fear, they shall all die before sunrise, I promise you. Burn the rats out; set fire to the house, then shall we have a light to see by."

The robbers quickly brought torches of pinewood and quantities of inflammable material which they began to throw against the walls. Without exposing themselves overmuch they soon contrived to have a fair-sized bonfire burning beneath the loopholes



AGAIN THOSE TWELVE DEADLY SPURTS OF FLAME WERE SEEN.

p. 186.

whence had been poured forth the destructive fire, and during this proceeding they lost merely two men, disabled. By the light of the flames the wall, windows and loopholes were clearly exposed to the fire of the marauders. A fusilier having been badly hit in the cheek as he pressed it against his musket whilst taking aim, Jack ordered the men not to expose themselves for the present.

"See! the house will quickly be ablaze—we shall have them all!" yelled Nur Muhammad; and through each loophole a leaden hail was intermittently poured.

"The Gurkhies are very quiet. I wondher what they're up to?" observed a private.

"Thrust Jaspao Thapa; 'tis himself knows what he's about," responded the sergeant.

"That's a thrue word," Larry agreed in a whisper. "The man that cud face a mad elephint so bowld 'ull be thrue comrade in a tight place. Gurkhies is brave sojers, though not convarsible."

The raiders began to expose themselves more freely. Their confidence came back when they found that no answering shots were returned.

"Keep up your fire through those loopholes," the "Black Tiger" gave order to a number of his men, while commanding the remainder to collect the firearms of their dead and wounded comrades. Several started to obey, but suddenly stopped in amazement.

"O, Azi Mullah, the weapons are gone!"

"Gone, ye fools! Who could have taken them?"

So saying the robber leaders cautiously examined the bodies, whilst the fire of their men prevented

Jack's party from shooting them down. No weapons were to be seen.

A group began to gather round the spot and rapidly increased, for anything uncanny attracts a crowd. The unexpected had never happened in the whole history of the Tigers' Band so frequently as on this night.

"They are demons, not men," one hazarded the opinion. "No men could have come out unobserved."

"Devils or angels," exclaimed Nur Muhammad, "they shall die before the dawn. Not for nothing are we called the 'Tigers.'"

The wondering group still increased and the outlaws who kept up their target practice through the loopholes, now numbered less than a dozen.

"Now is the little man's chanst, sorr," Sullivan whispered hoarsely to his officer. "He's got 'em safe."

"Fire!"

"Hurrah!" shouted Larry, and the Fusiliers responded with a cheer that convinced even the leaders that they had British soldiers to deal with.

The wall of the building at right angles to the house attacked,—to which no attention had been paid and from which no sound had as yet come,—was lighted up by an orange flame and at the same instant nearly a dozen men of that group dropped on to the lifeless bodies of their comrades. The survivors sprang briskly aside; the firing at the headman's house ceased as if by magic.

"Quick!" yelled the ensign. "Ready! Fire!"

Aim was rapidly taken this time and only four

were hit; but from Jaspao's post a second volley immediately followed with deadly effect, and before the robbers had cleared away a third and smaller volley from the same quarter completed the rout.

Out of seventy brigands barely thirty remained unwounded, whereas of Jaspao's party not a man had been touched, and of Jack's but three, of whom only one was badly hurt.

"Where in thunder did them Gurkhy spalpeens larn to load so quickly?" wondered Sergeant Sullivan.

"It's very queer," commented the ensign; "they certainly put in three volleys in less time than we could have managed two."

But if *they* thought it queer and hard to understand, what must have been the reflections of the disheartened outlaws.

"Let us go quickly," advised one of the survivors. "Azi Mullah, they are soldiers and English soldiers, and we know not how many there are. Let us be gone."

But, if cruel, the Pathan brothers were certainly courageous, and beside this their lust for revenge was very strong. Never before had they been caught in a trap like this, and the thought of it galled them both; they would risk their lives to secure vengeance.

"Look, the house is on fire!"

It was too true. The inflammable walls had caught the flames and retained them, and the whole building would soon be ablaze. Though the soldiers did their utmost to stamp it out, their efforts were in vain, and as the entire village was lighted up by the blaze the fighting was no longer in the dark.

There existed no back way by which to slip out; the defenders must leave by the side exposed to the fire of the sheltered raiders, and the advantages of cover which had previously been theirs now belonged to their opponents. Both dwellings were soon on fire and matters had assumed a desperate aspect. At least so thought the Nepalese, for Jaspao and his three men, with Gurkha dexterity and adroitness, slipped out unperceived, by a loophole at the side of their building, and so contrived to escape. The five fusiliers tried to effect an exit in the same way, but warning shots from the watchful brigands induced them to desist from the attempt.

"Jaspao!" yelled our hero from his post, "we can stay here no longer; we are going to charge. When I shout, let your men rush at the foe and at the same moment we shall make a dash for them."

But the crushing news was shouted back that the Gurkhas had fled. Jack was stupefied; he could not believe this of his brave and faithful friends.

"Never mind!" he called back cheerfully, "we shall win without them. When I give the command we must all charge and as you run, bend low .... Ready! Ch—"

He stopped half-way in the command as the four musket-shots in quick succession struck his ear. The enemy could not be seen, but their cries of surprise and pain told where the bullets had plunged and also told of confusion.

"That's Jaspao—Charge!" shouted the ensign joyfully, and the fusiliers dashed out with bayonets fixed. It was the exact instant; what Jaspao had

foreseen had happened. He had feared that a charge across the open in the light of the burning houses would mean annihilation, as thirty men, sheltered from harm, awaited them with muskets at their shoulders and fingers on the trigger. Slipping out unperceived with his men, he had noiselessly made a circuit and arrived within range from the other side. Guessing that his English comrades would by now be forced to make this dangerous rush, he diverted the attention of the enemy by a well-aimed fire in the nick of time.

The whole gang of raiders turned round to face this unexpected attack, and before they had recovered from their surprise and collected their wits the Tipperary lads were upon them. The badly-aimed and hurried volley that greeted them merely injured a couple slightly. Then the bayonet did its grim work. Not a word was uttered by the Irishmen as they thrust and thrust again; Sikhs and Pathans broke away yelling and panic-stricken, only to meet the kukris of the Gurkhas who slashed them down without mercy. The first man whom Jack came across he ran through the breast, and then took quick aim with his pistol at Azi Mullah, but that astute fighter ducked and the bullet passed through the head of the man behind. Pirthi Chand and his countrymen fought like heroes now that they had discovered that the terrible "Tigers" were not invincible, and, within the space of ten minutes, of the thirty unwounded brigands only nine stood upright. But of those nine the Tigers of the Black Mountain formed part. With one accord they now

made a fresh attempt to take to flight, but only four got through.

"Let not one escape!" was Jaspao's shrill command, and two of his Gurkhas ran after the four, up the hillside and through the scrub.

Of the remainder Jack had successfully engaged one, and a second was quickly disposed of. Sergeant Sullivan rushed at Nur Muhammad, and received a cut across his face and along the shoulder. As though going back to those days of his youth spent as a harvest labourer, when he tossed the hay vigorously on to the cart, he drove his bayonet through the big Pathan, lifting him from the ground until the steel broke off. The fearless little Jaspao rushed upon the still more powerful Azi Mullah, and with no weapon save his short kukri, almost clave the outlaw in twain.

Only one survivor remained,—a Sikh—and he was desperately fighting for his life with Private O'Grady. Suddenly the young Irishman gave a fearful yell of terror and, throwing down his weapon, ran for his life, the lengthy Sikh at his heels. Straight into the burning dwelling of Pirthi Chand dashed Larry, and the Sikh stopped, afraid to enter. A musket-shot from one of the astounded onlookers brought the robber to the ground, and, an instant later, O'Grady reappeared through the flames, bearing the body of the injured Lalbir Burathoki, on whose account the party had entered the village. The men cheered the rescuer, glad to find the little fellow untouched by the flames, and very penitent because of their want of thought.

Before the fight began Lalbir had been taken into a room at the back of the dwelling where the bullets would not reach him, and in the excitement he had been forgotten until the recollection of the helpless sufferer had flashed like a lightning streak across the brain of the Irishman, with the result already described.

Before long the two Gurkhas returned, grinning, and announced to their captain that none of the four fugitives would ever trouble the border again. A few of the wounded only remained alive and with them life was almost extinct, for the fight had indeed been in earnest. Jack and the sergeant visited these to see if anything could be done for them. The first they came to received them with a look of hatred, snatched his musket, pulled the trigger with a last dying effort, and rolled over dead. The bullet struck the regimental badge in the centre of Jack's helmet and went out through the back. An inch or two lower and he would have been a dead man.

"'Twas by way of bein' a close shave, sorr, but a miss is as good as a mile—sometimes. I'll go first, wid me pop-gun ready, before we does be axin any more to be trated be the doctor. Niver thrust a Paythan."

The rest of the injured, Irish, Gurkha and Pathan, were conveyed inside and laid on some straw. Jack and the handy sergeant did all they could to ease their pain and stop the bleeding, but only two of the "Tiger band" seemed to have the slightest chance of recovery, so deadly had been the kukris and the bayonets.

The English officer insisted that everything should be done to save their lives, and brought them water himself. Jaspao and his Gurkhas scoffed.

"Have we then desthroyed the brigand gang intirely, sargint darlin'?" Larry enquired, as he came to help in the improvised hospital.

"Sorra one left barrin' these blaggards here," Sullivan grimly remarked. "Some hunderds av poor misguided naygur-folk that they've robbed and murthered 'ull slape safer for this same."

"Poor divils," said Larry, as he looked around him. "They were brave men; 'tis a pity they were not honust. P'r'aps if they had bin brought up betther and had hearkened to the priesht, 'twould have made a differ."

"They wuz crool fiends, Larry dear, and 'tis a bether wurrld widout 'em. They wuz a pest to society and to the human race ginerally. 'Twuz a necessitous case an' they had to be wiped out, or ivery man that lies there cowld and shtiff, wud have slaughtered his dozen afore he died, an' have left childer to carry on the divil's biznuss. 'Tis betther so, Larry, belave me."

CHAPTER XVI

TRAPPED!

THE scourge was quite wiped out, but not without a heavy cost. Two fusiliers were killed and five wounded, three seriously. The headman was slightly injured and one of the Garwhalis killed. Two of the four Gurkhas had also received wounds, though none was killed.

The villagers had heard the sound of firing during the night, and some of the bolder spirits had approached and gone back to their friends to report the defeat of the "Tigers" band. Most of them had therefore returned by now, and Jack, backed up by Pirthi Chand, compelled some to bury the dead, and sent others to convey the wounded to the British camp before Jytak.

"How on earth did you fellows in the outbuilding put in those three volleys so quickly?" Jack asked one of the fusiliers who had been with Jaspao.

The soldier—a cockney, though in an Irish corps—grinned.

"Oh, 'e's a regular Bonyparty that Gurkhy, sir," was the appreciative reply. "Why, the little beggars slipped out like black cats on a dark night and comed back with all the weppins of them there 'tigers' wot you'd shot. So you sees we'd all of us got a pair of

guns ready loaded, an' some of us 'ad three. You may well say as we didn't tike long to load."

This explained both mysteries,—the rapidity of the firing from the other house, and the disappearance of the robbers' fire-arms.

One of the villager-fugitives who came in late, reported that the smaller section of the robberband had been seen making towards Pyung, which place they would probably have reached before sunrise, unaware of the fate of their comrades. Pirthi Chand communicated this piece of news to the ensign and begged him and his men to stay until the afternoon.

"If they hear, sahib," he said, "how their comrades and leaders have been treated here, and that you have left us, they will surely visit us and burn us alive. But if they learn that the valiant English and Gurkhas are still here, they will flee towards the west, lest you should destroy them also."

Jack acknowledged that the *lambardar's* fears were well-founded, and he consulted the sergeant. Sullivan agreed that after the hunting and marching all day, and the watching and hard fighting all through the night, it would be well to rest for a few hours in the village. As Jaspao was of the same opinion Pirthi Chand offered to make some of the villagers, who had run away from the fight, act as sentries, and the British and Gurkha soldiers were only too glad of the opportunity to lay themselves down. Pirthi Chand directed them to the best houses that remained untouched by the flames.

An hour after sunrise the whole party was wrapped in slumber, unconscious of the danger that

threatened. By reason of the chattering of the peasants, who had fled on hearing of the "Tigers'" approach, the news that a party of Englishmen were in the village had rapidly spread over the district, and had reached the ears of some Gurkha scouts that were hovering on the outskirts of Ochterlony's army. The scouts hastily assembled some thirty of their comrades, including an officer of high rank amongst the Nepalese nobility, by name Gambir Sing. Eager to fight either against the robbers—should they have proved successful,—or against the British soldiers, they were now marching with utmost speed towards the village.

Pirthi Chand and his two valiant Garwhalis were asleep, and his sentries no sooner caught sight of the terrible Gurkhas than they again took to their heels and vanished. In another moment the scouts had softly entered the house and were standing over the prostrate fusiliers, with kukris drawn.

"Take them alive," whispered Gambir Sing, "and seize their arms!"

The Gurkhas threw themselves upon the Irishmen and a furious struggle ensued. The latter were strong, brawny men, but so were the little mountaineers. Jack was secured at once by three scouts who gave the boy no chance to rise, and a couple of fusiliers shared the same fate. Their arms were bound to their sides and they were left on the floor, anxious and raging spectators of the fight. Had they not wriggled and rolled to the wall they might all have been trampled to death.

For Sullivan gripped the two Gurkhas who

sprang upon him, by the throat and, throwing them violently aside, he struggled to his feet and attempted to draw his side-arm. But they were up again and at him like wild-cats, and though he again shook them off, they brought the veteran to the earth at last.

Larry O'Grady likewise managed to rise, and dashing one of his assailants against the wall, he caught the other on the nose with a left-hander that bowled the little man over like a ninepin, and a stream of blood trickled down from the injured member. Larry had his bayonet half out when his arms were seized with a strong grip from behind, and the broken-nosed Gurkha, springing to his feet again, darted to his comrade's assistance, and Larry was laid on the floor overwhelmed by numbers. In another moment the seven fusiliers who were left by the "Tiger" brigands in a fit condition to fight, were all helpless and bound. The Gurkhas chuckled.

But where were Jaspao and his two men?

Sleeping in the adjoining building, they were awakened by the row. Seizing their muskets and quickly drawing their kukris, they darted to the scene of conflict, and found to their amazement the entrance blocked by a body of their own countrymen.

"Let us in!" commanded Jaspao. "Let us in, I say!"

"There is no room inside," the Gurkhas replied.

"The Englishmen must not be touched," the *subadar* screamed. "I will kill the man who dare hurt my English brother."

"We do not mean to slay them," a Gurkha *jemadar* (lieutenant) assured him.

The struggle being now over, the prisoners were brought into the street; Gambir Sing grinning with pleasure at the thought of the good haul he had made.

"Saints and patience! phwat can ut all mane?" asked the bewildered sergeant. "Jaspao can niver have bethrayed or desarted us, onless he's bin kilt."

"It looks like ut," growled another. "Wan can niver thrust a Hindu."

"I go bail he has not," Larry asserted. "'Tis some mysthery, but not traychery at all. The man who could fight like Misther Jaspao could niver be a thraytur; but, sargint dear, it shtrikes me we've gone undher this time.——Glory! here he is."

The smile died away on Gambir Sing's face as Jaspao came towards him and asked in a voice trembling with passion:

"What does this mean? These Englishmen are my friends and must be set free."

"Troth then," whispered Sullivan, "I did be thinkin' Jaspao was a good-timpered gossoon, but just obsarve the face av him!"

"They are Englishmen and enemies of Nepal," the officer replied, "and they must be taken before Amar Sing."

"I say they are my comrades and must be set free," Jaspao retorted. "Will you fight me for their freedom? Yesterday they hunted with us and ate with us as brothers, and last night we fought side by side, and together we vanquished half a hundred robbers. They are my brethren until they reach

the British encampment, and I say they shall be set free, or I will fight you for them."

The Gurkha nobleman was in his turn becoming very angry. Jaspao was begrimed and powder-stained, and his dress was cut and torn.

"Fight *thee!*" Gambir Sing exclaimed. "I will have thee shot, thou impudent rascal!"

Jaspao was too furious to reply,—the words would not come out.

"And who art *thou?*" the Gurkha continued, "to say they shall be free? I will teach thee to respect thy betters. Know then that I am Gambir Sing, nephew of Bhim Sen Thapa."*

"And I," retorted Jaspao hotly and haughtily, "I am Jaspao Thapa, son of Amar Sing."

A buzz of interest and a gasp of surprise ran round the ranks of the Gurkhas, for Jaspao's doughty deeds were known to all, and was he not the youngest son of their beloved Commander-in-Chief? The announcement staggered Gambir Sing for a moment, but he quickly answered:

"Jaspao Thapa's courage is well known to all Gurkhas. But these are my prisoners and he has no right to interfere."

This statement was undoubtedly correct, and Jack recognized its truth. Difficult though the position was for Jaspao, he never hesitated. His two men ranged themselves alongside their captain.

"Oh, Magars and Gurungs!" he cried. "Who of you have served under the great Amar Sing

* The famous Prime Minister of Nepal.

Thapa? I stand here in his place—in the place of the chief general of the Gurkha nation,—and I know that he would wish the Englishmen to go free."

He then proceeded to relate all that he and his white friends had gone through on the previous day, giving Jack's party credit for wondrous valour, praising them for the care they had bestowed upon poor Lalbir Burathoki, and explaining how Larry had rushed into the burning house to save the wounded man's life.

The listeners soon began to show intense interest and even excitement, and when he went on to give an account of the attack by the robber-band and told how his men and the British had fought shoulder to shoulder against tremendous odds, the enthusiasm of the warlike Gurkhas was fairly roused. He ended with the words:

"Are they not then the comrades of the Gurkhas? If ye had gone through that combat together, would ye not fight for the liberty of your English brothers, even as I and my men will surely do if necessary. Ye will have to slay us before they can be taken away, and am I not Jaspao, son of Amar Sing Thapa? Are there any of Amar Sing's men here, who will fight for the honour of his son?"

"I will fight for thee, Jaspao Thapa," cried the *jemadar*. "For ten years have I fought under thy father and received nearly a score of wounds. These Englishmen shall be our comrades and brothers until they have joined their own army."

He stepped to Jaspao's side and his brother went with him. A moment's pause and half a dozen

more followed the example. The odds were now eleven against twenty-four and one of the eleven was wounded.

The two factions stood eyeing one another, each waiting for the other to make the first move, for neither Jaspao Thapa nor Gambir Sing liked to take upon himself the responsibility of an attack upon his own countrymen, the defenders of his native land in the time of her need. Jack noticed Jaspao whisper to his one unwounded comrade of the Jytak garrison, who grinned and nodded in return, and bound though the boy was, he could not help wondering what they were conferring about.

He knew later on, and was thankful!

"I shall be compelled to slay the prisoners then, Jaspao Thapa," said Gambir slowly and resolutely, "and Bhim Sen Thapa shall judge between us."

"If thou dost attempt to hurt a hair of their heads, we fire," Jaspao solemnly declared. "You outnumber us and will perchance slay us all, but what good will that do Nepal? Are not we Gurkhas few enough already?"

"It is true, Jaspao Thapa, and the English outnumber us by many thousands. And yet when I propose to weaken the strength of the British by keeping these men in captivity, thou sayest: 'Nay, rather shall our own numbers be reduced.' Is that wise council, or is it child's talk?"

"I am in honour bound to protect my friends, Gambir Sing, for it was through pity for my injured Lalbir that they stepped aside into this village. Had it not been for me they might by now have

joined their friends. *Thou* art not in honour bound to fight against thy clan.—Ha! who are these?—Pirthi Chand, thou art a valiant man though only a Garwhali."

Jaspao's pro-British party was now increased to sixteen men, for Pirthi Chand had suddenly appeared on the scene with four well-armed men. With true loyalty and courage the Garwhali *lambardar* had, from the moment of the capture, been trying to rouse his clan to a sense of the duty they owed to the Englishmen who had saved their village, their cattle, and the better part of their goods. So great was the dread of the Gurkhas, however, that Pirthi had only succeeded in enlisting a couple of new hands, and with these and the two unwounded men who had fought by his side on the previous night, the *lambardar* now joined forces with Jaspao.

"Who may these be?" Gambir haughtily asked. "Garwhalis? Bah! them we need not fear."

All eyes were turned towards the newcomers, when the noise of a scuffle, an Irish oath, the rattle of arms and of bayonets being pushed home, caused Gambir Sing to turn sharply round. Too late! A gleam of anger shot across the nobleman's face as he saw what had happened.

Jaspao's soldier from Jytak, in obedience to his captain's hint, had taken advantage of the diversion made by the arrival of Pirthi Chand to creep behind the British captives and cut the thongs that bound them. Seven quick slicing strokes of his razor-like kukri had set free the seven prisoners, their muskets were in a heap close at hand; a quick rush all

together, and the upsetting of the two or three Gurkhas who stood in the way, had placed them once again in possession of their arms.

The muskets were still loaded, bayonets were fixed, and twenty-three men now faced twenty-four. The first expression in the eyes of Gambir Sing was one of rage; the second showed determination.

"Our forces are equal," he observed calmly. "We shall fight, and on thy head be the bloodshed, Jaspao Thapa."

"Nay, on thine, Gambir Sing, for thou hast a choice, whereas I have none."

The ranks closed up; the Gurkhas whipped out their kukris, and muskets leapt to the shoulder. In another moment the earth would have been red with blood, and Jack Russell was filled with horror at the thought of the awful slaughter that would ensue and at the idea that he should have brought it about. He stepped forward and cried:

"Stop!"

"Gambir Sing," he continued, turning to the Gurkha officer, "I hope we British have proved that we are not cowards, yet I would rather surrender than see so many brave Gurkhas slay one another for our sakes. Jaspao, tell your men to lower their weapons."

Jaspao shook his head in a decided manner, and seeing that his friend would not comply with the request, the ensign continued:

"You have right on your side, Gambir Sing, and so has Jaspao also. We are equally matched and perhaps some of us would escape and perhaps not;

but it is certain that very few would be left alive. In such cases we English have a way of settling our differences. Let us toss up!"

He produced a coin, and muskets were lowered while he explained the process.

"If this side falls uppermost," he continued, "then we shall become your prisoners without resistance; but if the other side, then we go free and are your friends. Is that not fair?"

"I do not understand your English ways," said Gambir Sing. "What difference can it make how the coin falls? Ye will be English and we shall be Gurkhas just the same. If I am in the right now, I shall still be in the right whatever the coin may say; and if Jaspao Thapa was in the right before and I wrong, he will be right still. I do not understand how the spinning of a coin can turn right into wrong."

Then Jack had a finer inspiration.

"You are a good soldier, Gambir Sing," he said, "and we British love brave men. Last night my men and those of Jaspao Thapa, fighting like brothers, destroyed the chief band of the 'Tigers of the Black Mountain'. Now Pirthi Chand, the *lambardar*, tells me that at Pyung, less than a dozen miles away, there is yet another robber-band forty strong, who have raided the village and slain the people."

The boy paused and looked Gambir Sing in the face. The Gurkhas, who had been listening with the keenest interest, now became excited. What was coming next?

"Shall we not," Jack continued, "all go together to Pyung and destroy that scourge of the country-side also, Gurkhas and Englishmen fighting shoulder to shoulder? When we have finished the work we can talk over the question of fighting one against another, and I give my word that my men will be true comrades to yours, and if you, Gambir Sing, decide that we must remain prisoners, I promise that we shall not resist. My friend, Jaspao Thapa, must not be slain by his own race, nor must he fight against his brother-Magars."

"Good! good! The Englishman is right!" cried several from both sides. "Let us fight the robbers, not our brethren."

Gambir reflected a moment—then he smiled.

"It is good," said he. "That will certainly be better than slaying our own countrymen."

Jack explained the proceedings to his men, who had been somewhat mystified by the long speeches. He then laid his musket on the ground. Sullivan promptly did the same and the rest of the fusiliers followed his example, though one or two did not at all like the idea of parting with their trusty weapons after such a crisis. Gambir looked pleased at this sign of trust on their part.

"Pick up your muskets," said he. "Who knows the way? Let us start at once."

"The *lambardar* will direct us," said Jack, and Pirthi Chand signified his willingness.

"Gambir Sing will be in command," Jack continued, and Jaspao assented, but Gambir would not listen to the proposal.

"Jaspao Thapa is renowned," said he, "for his warlike deeds and skilful leading. I will acknowledge him my captain until the fighting is over."

Jaspao thanked his rival and late enemy courteously, and proceeded briefly to relate the manner in which he and Jack had become acquainted. Whilst they and the *jemadar* were arranging the plan of campaign the soldiers, with that merry devil-may-care good-fellowship that distinguishes the little mountaineers of Nepal, were busily employed in chumming together. They presented cheroots to the Irishmen and sucked at the pipes that were offered in return, and jollity prevailed.

The man upon whose nose Larry had set his mark, approached him with a diabolical grin and an air of proprietorship, and proceeded to feel the Irishman's muscle. Those whom Sullivan had knocked down chatted and laughed with him and described how their heads were still buzzing from the effect of the blows.

They seemed gratified that such displays of strength had been made at their expense.

CHAPTER XVII

THE LAST STAND OF THE BRIGANDS

PIRTHI CHAND and the Garwhalis led the party southward through the valleys for a couple of hours. The headman then consulted Jaspao, and, as a result, two of his best men with half a dozen Gurkha scouts were sent out well in advance, and before long the rest of the party halted on the skirts of a thicket.

Shortly the scouts returned, bringing news of the quarry.

"They are leaving the village of Arjal," one of the Garwhalis announced, "having sacked Pyung and butchered many of its inhabitants. But Pyung is a poor place and they probably got little loot, so now they have collected all the cattle and portable goods from Arjal and are going west. They are forty in number and do not seem to have heard of the destruction that has overtaken their leaders."

"They are going west?" Jack asked. "Can we cut them off?"

"I think so, sahib," Pirthi Chand put in. "I know the route they are sure to take, and also a path over the hills that will save much time."

"They slew as many as resisted, sahib; the others they have so far spared. The women they will

take away as slaves, and the men they will compel to carry their own goods for their new masters and drive their own cattle, until the robbers are in safety. Then they will turn upon the Arjalis and butcher all the men and boys."

"Will they?" muttered the ensign. "The fiends! We'll see to that; eh, Gambir Sing?"

The Gurkha officer nodded in grim assent.

"This way!" said Pirthi Chand. "We must hasten."

They hurried through scrub and forest, across a long steep ridge and down the other side, concealed from view by the dense bushes that were dotted all over the southern slope. Expert scouts moved a few hundred yards in advance on either side, and presently one of these came back with the news that the outlaws had been sighted. Jaspao at once consulted the lambardar, who pointed out a shoulder of the hill to their right, that the quarry must needs pass.

"Make for that bend," Jaspao ordered, and the party changed direction half-right, and hurried through the scrub.

Our friends had a much greater distance to cover, however, than had the robbers, and the rough ground, dense thickets and bush impeded their progress. Having to move at a trot, they could not very well keep under cover, and when within half a mile of the bend of the road, one of the keen-eyed Pathans caught a glimpse of the big Irishmen and gave the alarm. The crack of musketry and a line of smoke-clouds from behind bushes and trees announced

that the brigands had taken up a position and meant to fight for their booty.

The range was too great for the fire to be effective. Jack advised a careful advance, firing as they moved, but Jaspao and Gambir over-ruled him.

"No," said the former; "Pathans are good shots. We must charge them with the kukri and the bayonet, or they will escape."

He ordered his men to spread out and creep forward until they could close, and let them taste cold steel, and Sergeant Sullivan declared that the subadar was right. The order was promptly obeyed. Creeping through the undergrowth without any attempt to return the fire, a dozen paces separating each man, they drew nearer and nearer to the outlaws, the bullets singing harmlessly overhead, or burying themselves in the ground in front. Only three were hit during this serpent-wise approach and none was killed. When within three-score paces, Jaspao gave a shout, rose to his feet, and darted forward to close with the enemy.

Jack and the Irishmen followed, and from right and left the Gurkhas charged down upon the hidden foe. Again and again the muskets of the robbers cracked, but the fear of death was upon the marksmen and their aim was wild.

Jaspao, seeming to bear a charmed life, was the first to close with the Pathans, beating Larry O'Grady by a short head. Kukris and bayonets spoke at last in reply to the fire-arms, and the murderers fell before the cold steel, or broke and fled. Gambir showed himself a true Gurkha, charging alone into

a group of three, two of whom he slew, but the third cut him down with a blow that would have ended his career had not Sullivan let fly as the Pathan struck. The knife simply laid the Gurkha's cheek open.

A Mohammedan from Oudh, who was running to escape from Jaspao's party came past the fallen Gambir and sliced viciously as he passed. But Jack was following close. Reaching forward with his sword, he turned the blow. The Oudh man spun round and hurled his knife at the ensign who jumped aside—though not quite quickly enough. The blade grazed against his hip and the blood flowed freely. Nevertheless he made an effort to overtake the outlaw, but the pain was too great and the man escaped. He sank to the ground.

"Are you hurrt then, sorr?"

He was dimly conscious of Sullivan's voice in his ear, and replied mechanically:

"Not very badly, I think."

"Bedad, then, ut's bleedin' fast enough. Let me see the cut, sorr.—Ah, it 'ull hurrt ye, but ye'll soon be in the thick av ut agen. 'Tis not by way of bein' so bad, and I can stop the bleedin'. I'll be takin' that rag av yours, sorr."

"With the boy's handkerchief and some strips from the cleanest-looking of the many turbans that lay around, the handy sergeant bandaged the cut, and then left the ensign in order to attend to the other wounded. Three of the Gurkhas had been killed and four wounded, and of the Fusiliers one was dead and one badly wounded.

On the comparatively level ground to the south of their route, the short-legged Gurkhas could not hope to overtake the retreating Pathans, so they halted to bring the fugitives down by musket fire, while the Irishmen pursued and caught up with several of the runners.

The band was broken up for ever, though about a dozen had made good their escape.

Those men of Arjal whose lives had been spared for a space in order that they might act as coolies for their spoilers, were tied together neck to neck in a long line, to prevent escape. Those few, however, who were employed in driving the cattle, had of necessity been granted greater freedom. A couple of the brigands had been set as a guard to watch these drovers and to shoot on the first sign of a suspicious movement.

No sooner was the attention of their guards taken up by the attack of the Gurkhas than these cattlemen left their beasts and bolted, hovering at a safe distance to see which side would prevail. Perceiving that their late masters had been worsted in the encounter and were all either slain or in full flight, and that some Englishmen were among the victors, these fellows screwed up courage to return, and, seizing the weapons of the fallen brigands, they hastily cut the throats of the wounded Pathans before the indignant ensign could order them to cease.

"You cowards!" he cried, raising himself from the ground to a sitting position. "You would not fight them whilst they could hit back, but now that they are down you can murder them without fear."

"Sahib," protested one of the murderers with a low salaam, "they have slain my father and many of our friends, and would have killed us but for your valour,—for which we all thank you. Why then should we not exterminate the dogs when we have the chance?"

"Why then did you not help us before?"

"We are not soldiers, sahib; we do not love fighting. Besides, we did not see the Englishmen, only the Gurkhas, and"—here the man lowered his voice and glanced anxiously towards the Nepalese warriors—"and, sahib, if the Pathans are tigers, the Gurkhalis are not lambs."

Jaspao laughed.

"True," said he, "ye are not soldiers; that is plainly seen. But why should they not kill the rogues, little brother? These curs are not honest fighters, but murderers and they deserve death. You English are mad,—all mad! If you had your way you would nurse and doctor these wounded thieves until they recovered, and then they would be tried and hanged for murder. It seems to me that these cowards of Arjalis have been more merciful."

"But to kill wounded men!" said Jack in disgust.

One of the outlaws, who had been lying a few paces away as though dead, now stirred and rose to his feet.

"Save me, sahib!" he cried, running towards the English officer. "Do not let them slay me!"

Blood was trickling down the man's face, for one of the Irishmen had given him a crack with the butt-end, that had knocked down and half stunned

the fellow. He had recovered his senses too late to escape, and had feigned death and so been left alone by the Arjalis. Hearing the Englishman's disapproval of the slaughter of the wounded, and fearing that, should he depart, the vengeful Arjalis would inspect the bodies and make sure, he had risen to beg for mercy.

"I am not a Pathan," he protested, "and if I had not joined the band I should have been slain as they slew others in our village."

"Whence dost thou come then?" Jack demanded.

"From Narwal, sahib, in the hills."

Jack gave a start. This was the state of which Carruthers' uncle was rajah.

"I will spare your life," he said, "and you must come with us as a prisoner. Sergeant, can you mend this fellow's bleeding head; it was probably you who broke it."

"Shure, that's not onlikely, sorr. I'll thry."

While this conversation was taking place the rest of the villagers and the women had been set free by Sergeant Sullivan's orders, and they showered thanks and blessings upon their rescuers. Advising them to make the best of their way back, and giving them the arms of the dead brigands as a protection should the escaped outlaws return to Arjal for revenge, the Gurkhas and Irishmen made for the nearest stream, where they sat down and prepared a meal.

Gambir Sing, being a tough and plucky fellow, was able to walk, but this was too painful a mode of locomotion for Jack Russell. The Gurkhas in-

sisted on making a chair for him by crossing hands, and in this way he was conveyed northwards again in the direction of Malaon.

"Are we your prisoners, Gambir Sing?" he asked, as the procession toiled slowly up the hillside.

"Prisoners, Russail Sahib! No, no, we are brothers now. Have we not fought side by side? I have an idea also that I owe my life to you and to one of your brave men. Let there be no further talk of prisoners?"

Jaspao chuckled audibly, whereupon Gambir grinned and, turning towards him, held out his hand.

"Let us do as the mad English do," he said. "Thou wast right, Jaspao Thapa, to be loyal to thy comrades."

"And thou wast likewise right, Gambir Sing, to capture these Englishmen and so be loyal to thy country. But now we are all brothers."

"Where is the big man who saved my life?" the Gurkha chieftain presently enquired, and Jack introduced the sergeant, who saluted the officer and gave him a hearty: "*Ram, ram, sahib.*"

"*Ram, Ram,*" Gambir Sing cordially returned, and added in Khas-Kura:

"Do you also speak Gurkhali?"

Answering for Sullivan, Jack informed the Gurkha that the sergeant unfortunately did not possess that accomplishment, though he knew a little *Urdu*.

The Hindustani tongue, however, was not familiar to Gambir Sing.

"Tell him, sahib," said he, "that I thank him with all my heart for saving my life.

"Shure, your honour," Sullivan replied, "tell him he's heartily welkim, and that it's meself is rale sorry I cud not save him from getting that cut."

"That is nothing," said Gambir when Jack had done his duty as interpreter, "a cut on the face is not to be regretted."

"Tell him also," added the Gurkha, with a grin, "that we are all brothers now, and he is doubly my brother. But, in truth, my mother would be surprised at the size of her new son."

Gambir Sing was a small man even for a Gurkha, and the stalwart sergeant towered fourteen inches above him. Sullivan and his compatriots were tickled by the idea.

"Faith, that's true, sorr, but not more surprised nor my own mother wud be. Tell him I've fought against the Mahrattas and I've helped desthroy the Frinch, but niver have I met anywan betther worth the fighting nor the Gurkhies."

Again the ensign translated, and Gambir like all Gurkhas was very fond of praise. Their courage is an undisputed fact, and Lord Roberts asserts that "they are perhaps the bravest race on earth," but like more civilized folk they have this fault—that they like their valour to be acknowledged and appreciated. The officer unfastened from his uniform a small brooch of plain gold ornamented with a couple of diamonds, and this he presented to the sergeant.

"That is for saving my life," he said. "Should you live through the war, it may help you to remember that Gurkhas can be good friends as well as sturdy foemen."

"Bedad, your honour, 'tis the rale quolity you are, and I thank you heartily. 'Tis an illigant jew'l! Phwat d'ye think av that, Larry me bhoy? Savin' the loives av Gurkhy officers is a payin' biznuss,—betther nor the killin' av them."

"Begor!" exclaimed Larry, "'tis you that are the lucky wan, and illigant it is, thrue for you. Whist! sargint, 'tis you can sling the *bat,** so ax old Purthy to find us some more robber-bands for to exterminate, and won't I save his honour's life? No, bedad, won't I? An' if we've bin so unlucky as to desthroy all the brigands in this melancholious counthry, shure we will be afther bribin' some misguided haythen to purtind to assassinate him for to give me a chanst of dimonsthratin' how bowld a rescuer mezelf is."

Jack laughed, and, scenting a joke, the Gurkhas pricked their ears.

"What is it they say?" Gambir asked, and, to the intense amusement of the mountaineers, our hero once more acted as interpreter. Larry's witticism flew from one to another, and the merry little fellows roared at the idea and pretended to murder one another so that the Irishman might come to the rescue. A very small joke will "fetch" a Gurkha, and Gambir Sing laughed more merrily than any.

The sergeant, in defiance of all military regulations, fastened his brooch to his jacket collar, saying:

"Arrah! 'tis a long while since the Sullivans was

* *Bat* = language.

by way av goin' about bedeckt wid di'mands! Ye may not belave ut, sorr, but wan av my ancesthors was wanst king av Connaught."

"Oh," said Jack, who was aware that all true Irishmen are of royal descent. "And when was that?"

"Many hunderds av years ago, worse luck."

"Arrah, sargint, git away wid ye! The Sullivans was always undher the O'Grady's."

"Come, Larry, was an O'Grady the emperor then?" Jack asked.

"Sorra wan av me knows exactly what an imperor may be, sorr. But 'tis thruth that some av my postherity was kings av all Ireland in the auld days. Ye may smile, sorr, but 'twas so, whin you English were nakkid savages painted blue. 'Tis an upsthart race, the English,—and no offence, your honour."

"I can't boast of a king for my ancestor, Larry, I'm afraid," Jack replied, "but once upon a time a forefather of mine was the admiral of the combined navies of the world."

"Ye don't say so, sorr!" Sullivan exclaimed with increased respect. "And who might he have bin?"

"Noah was his name."

"Arrah! I see ye're foolin' av us. Noah, bedad! —well, that's wan for you, sorr."

"History doesn't tell us, Larry," Jack continued, "of any of the O'Grady family being present in that ship, so I can't believe that your family is any older that mine after all."

"In that ship, indade!" Larry scornfully retorted. "I'd have your honour know that in the auld days

the O'Grady's were the rale quol'ty and had boats av their own, and would not be behowlden to anywan for a sail. And if the histhry does not mention thim, sorr, was not the Irish always bein' put upon out av jealously. Shure, 'twas not an Irish histhorian and that's why."

Sullivan nodded his head.

"That's a thrue wurrd," said he. "Who won the battle av Fontenoy, but the Irish Brigade? But did we get the credit av ut from the Frinch histhorians? Bedad! no, they ignore us."

"True enough, we were beaten by the Irish Brigade there," Jack admitted.

"That's a fact. You had baten the Frinchies, but nothin' cud withstand the charge av the bhoys. Now, sorr, considher the accounts av the fightin' av late years. Who resaves most praise?"

"I haven't thought about it," Jack replied. "Who?"

"'Tis the Scotchies,—the Highlanders. True, the Scotchies is grand sojers and well I know ut, but to read the histhries wan wud think there wuz niver English nor Oirish in the fightin' at all, at all. 'Tis all Camerons and Black Watches and such outlandish corps. And why is that, sorr?"

"I'm sure I don't know, sergeant."

"I'll be tellin' you," Sullivan confidentially continued. "'Tis bekas the histhorians is nearly all Scotchies. English writers are fair enough to the Oirish and the Highlanders,—more than fair, for shure the English yeoman is as good a fighter as the wurrld iver saw, but to the English reader he is not picturesque. He is only the common working-

day sojer. But begor! the Highlanders are picturesque, and the Oirish are wild, reckless divils, and so the readin' public does be likin' to hear tell av them,—not about the common sojer that only does his duty."

The sergeant and his henchman, Larry, relapsed into silence, perhaps to ponder over the wrongs of Ireland and the iniquities of Scottish battle historians.

As the party proceeded on its way they found that the news had spread, as news does in the East; and the country people came out to look at the men who had destroyed the infamous band of robbers. For a whole day friend and foe journeyed together, but at length the time came for them to part. Here Jaspao and the Gurkhas shook hands with their foeman-friends, and the parting was almost tearful for they had all become the best of chums. The burly Sergeant was now a great admirer of Jaspao, and he declared the Gurkhas to be "proime chaps"; and the Nepalese on their part said complacently: "What splendid fighters are the British; as brave as Gurkhas—almost!"

For extreme modesty is not one of the Gurkha virtues.

"And now, I suppose, we must be enemies?" said the ensign.

And so they parted; the Irishmen giving three hearty cheers for the men who had stood so true to them.

Jack next shook hands with the valiant and grateful Pirthi Chand and said good-bye, telling him that he deserved to be headman of a city or a province

as, barring the Gurkhas, he was the very finest Asiatic he had ever met. But Pirthi Chand was loth to leave his new friends, and announced his intention of accompanying them to their destination. The ensign was puzzled about his Narwali prisoner, not knowing what to do with him. He did not like to hand him over as a murderer to be hanged, and the man was so genuinely grateful to Jack for saving his life and for the care bestowed upon his broken head, that our hero felt inclined to forgive him his membership of the robber-gang.

"What wilt thou do, if I let thee go free?" he asked.

"Thou art my master; I will serve thee," the man replied. "Who knows but that I may do thee a service some day."

And so it was settled that he should pass as Jack's servant.

CHAPTER XVIII

A TERRIBLE ACCUSATION

WHEN within a few miles of the British camp the sergeant and Larry hurried on in front, as night was drawing in, and in the dark the approaching party stood the risk of being fired upon by the outposts before any explanation could be given. In warfare against foes who are so good at night attacks and surprises the shot follows the sentry's challenge very quickly, in fact the soldier generally fires first and challenges afterwards. The arrival of the two Irishmen somewhat astonished the officer in command of the patrol with which they soon came up.

"Hullo!" said he. "Where the dickens do you come from?"

"From the South av Oireland, plaze your honour," was Sullivan's reply.

"Just arrived from there?" the officer laughed, and the sergeant proceeded to explain. Half an hour later the others were passed through, and Jack was conducted to General Ochterlony's tent. The famous general read the letter, and complimenting the bearer on his conduct and good fortune in being set free, found a post for him in the Tipperary Fusiliers, a regiment that had lost many officers. Jack was very pleased with this fresh stroke of luck,

for next to his Englishmen of the 162nd, this was the very choice he himself would have made.

Colonel Moran of the Fusiliers took the ensign in charge and introduced him to Captain O'Hanlon, his new skipper, and rough and ready quarters were speedily found for him in that officer's tent. To his delight he discovered that it was to O'Hanlon's company that his late companions belonged.

Captain O'Hanlon was a very jolly and typical Irishman. He told the lad to make himself quite at home and treat all belongings as his own, for O'Hanlon had just come back from a conversation with his trusted sergeant, and Sullivan's glowing pourtrayal of our hero's character showed the captain a man after his own heart.

"Now you'll be wanting something to eat, young un," said he—"I'll just see what I can get you."

But before he could quit the tent one of the general's *aides-de-camp* appeared.

"Hello, O'Hanlon," he said, "is your friend Ensign Russell here, because if so I want him?"

"He is. Let me introduce you. Mr. Russell—Lieutenant Manning. What is it, Manning my boy?"

"General Ochterlony wants to see you, Mr. Russell, so will you please come with me. There's an imbecile nigger with him, who has been stuffing him with some wonderful horse-marine yarn. Come along."

"But Russell ought not to walk for a few days," O'Hanlon interrupted. "He's been sliced by a knife, and I want the wound to heal quickly, for I mean to work him hard before he's many days

older. He'll have to take temporary rank as lieutenant whilst in this company."

"Oh, I didn't know that; I'll get a *doolie*."

Jack was borne to the general's tent, where, to his great surprise, whom should he find but Pirthi Chand, the *lambardar*.

"What truth is there in the tale that this man has been telling me?" Ochterlony asked. "About some 'Tigers' or other ferocious beasts? He declares that you have been commanding a combined party of Gurkhas and Irishmen and exterminating brigands. Is it true? Sit down, my boy."

Jack took the proffered seat and told his tale from beginning to end.

"Now, young man," the general commented, "that sort of thing is not exactly what His Majesty pays your magnificent salary for, but I like you for it. The Gurkhas seem to have behaved like gentlemen. I don't relish killing the beggars,—I'd much rather have them in our regiments. And so we shall soon, and you will be able to boast that you were the first European to lead the Gurkhas to victory. That will be something to talk about fifty years hence."

Pirthi Chand had slipped away, having repaid part of the debt owed by his village, and Jack never saw him again.

"Now, young'un, you've had more than your fair share of excitement," Captain O'Hanlon exhorted our hero on his return from the interview, "so you've just got to lie down and take it easy. I've a good mind to send you into hospital."

"I should mutiny if you tried," Jack retorted. "I

shall be all right in a few days, it's only a flesh-cut and not a deep one at that."

"Still you must be careful. If we don't find plenty of work to do in a week or two, call me a false prophet. And I want you to be fit for the work, as I'm sure you're not a shirker. We've only been skirmishing so far, but after each skirmish we find ourselves in a slightly better position than before, so the 'old man' knows what he's about, and when the time comes for him to strike hard, he'll be there, never fear."

"I hope that good time won't be long in coming," sighed Jack. "I'm rather sick of failure after failure."

"Yes, your column has had a rough time. I suppose this Nepal business is your first experience of warfare?"

"It is—and it hasn't been very encouraging so far."

Jack had always believed the British arms to be invincible and irresistible, yet for nearly six months the force to which he had been posted had been repulsed time after time by a greatly inferior number, and for two months the boy had been a prisoner, forced to listen to the pæans of triumph of a victorious foe.

At length he began to taste the sweets of victory, for Ochterlony, making every move with equal skill and caution, was gradually gaining the upper hand. Step by step he pressed forward, out-manœuvring the Gurkhas again and again, and destroying one small fort or stockade after another.

General Ochterlony's army numbered 7,000 men,

and against these Amar Sing Thapa could only place from 2,800 to 3,000 troops in the field. In spite of the odds in his favour, however, the British leader refused to throw away his men unnecessarily, preferring to dislodge the enemy from their positions by skilful tactics rather than by useless attacks in which many lives must be lost without any proportionate advantage. Owing to his wound, Jack was unable to take part in the two or three successful skirmishes that took place during the week that followed his arrival.

Yet when a great advantage was to be gained by a bold assault, Ochterlony was not the man to shrink from the risk, and by the middle of April he had succeeded in so placing his brave opponent that, by the capture of a certain peak called Deothal, the Gurkhas would be almost hopelessly out-manœuvred. On April 14th the general quietly resolved that this key to the position should be stormed on the morrow, and made his preparations accordingly, first misleading the Gurkhas so that they imagined he would not for the present dare to make the attempt.

Jack's wound had now healed, and he was looking forward to the morrow's assault in the best of spirits and talking it over with O'Hanlon, when an orderly from the general entered the tent to command the ensign's presence immediately.

"You're a favourite of the gods, Russell," said his captain. "You see what it is to be born lucky. He's going to give you some responsible staff duty that will get your name into the despatches if

you shape. And I wanted you badly;—it's a nuisance."

With hopes raised by these words Jack left his Irish friend,—but his face fell as he entered the headquarters tent and noticed the stony glare with which the general received him. They were alone in the room.

"I have received a communication from General Martindell," the chief announced in a cold, quiet voice, "and as a consequence thereof I am obliged to place you under arrest, Ensign Russell."

Jack gasped. His hopes were shattered, and for a time he was too mystified to take in the full import of the words he had heard.

"I suppose you will have no difficulty in guessing the reason," the general continued.

"Under arrest, sir?" the boy stammered at length.

"Yes, sir, under arrest. Your infamous correspondence with Jaspao Thapa has been brought to light,—found on the person of a Gurkha who was captured whilst scouting."

"My letter to Jaspao Thapa?"

The general nodded his head, still regarding our hero with an icy stare as though he were some loathsome reptile. The nervous boy was so crushed by this treatment that he felt—and probably looked—a worthless and guilty creature, though unable to recollect what his crime might have been.

"But I had no idea that I was doing anything wrong, sir," he pleaded. "He was my friend and had been very good to me."

"And, pray, is that a reason, Mr. Russell, that

you should divulge your country's secrets and sell the lives of scores of your comrades?"

"Sell their lives, sir?" Jack gasped. "I—really cannot understand."

"Come, come, sir, this affectation of innocence is very unnecessary. You do not quite seem to grasp the fact that, as I told you, the correspondence has been brought to light and that denial is therefore useless. I should advise you to confess."

By this time Jack had to a great extent overcome the nervousness caused by General Ochterlony's sternness and the startling shock of the charge brought against him. Though still completely mystified the boy had heard enough to understand that the accusation was one at the very thought of which his whole nature revolted. It was nothing less than downright treachery. The very unfairness of such a charge stung him and braced him up to repel it, and he cared not whether a general accused him or a drummer-boy. His temper began to rise, but by a great effort he controlled it.

"General Ochterlony," he replied, looking the great man steadfastly between the eyes, and speaking with the simple unconscious dignity of a manly nature, "I fail to understand what the charge against me can be. The only correspondence I have had with any Gurkha is this: After I had been set free, Jaspao Thapa, the man who captured me and who chanced to take a great liking to me, sent me a present of a kukri, with a note asking me to accept the same, and thanking me for some simple services I had been able to render the wounded."

"Services you had rendered the wounded?" interrupted the general.

"Yes, sir. In return I sent him a brace of pistols and a letter of thanks. That there could be any harm in so doing I never dreamt, sir."

General Ochterlony kept his eyes full upon the boy's whilst he was speaking. The ensign's manly bearing and the way in which he met his gaze, evidently produced its impression. The general's tone became less stern.

"Mr. Russell," he said gravely, "I beg your pardon if I took your guilt for granted without hearing both sides. I will tell you of what you are accused, and the grounds for the charge as they have been stated to me.

"First.—Why should the Gurkhas have set you free so easily unless they had received some adequate *quid pro quo?*

"Secondly.—The day after Jaspao's messenger came into the British camp to bring you the present, and after—as you admit—you had written a reply to his note, the Gurkhas at once became aware of a sudden change in the disposition of the outposts, and made a successful and deplorable raid. How did they know of this change?"

"They always kept themselves well acquainted with what was going on, sir, they are such splendid scouts. How did they know that Dorricot and I were taking a despatch to General Martindell, when I was captured by Jaspao Thapa, sir?"

"Very good. I admit that the first two grounds of suspicion are in themselves very weak, until the following facts strengthen them.

"Thirdly.—A few days after you left Jytak, and whilst on your way here, one of the Gurkha scouts was taken prisoner near the camp, and upon him was found a letter from you to Jaspao Thapa, clearly stating that, in addition to the information already supplied by Ensign Dorricot and yourself, you would now redeem the pledge you had made when they released you,—and the note went on to inform them of the withdrawal of the outpost."

"It's a foul lie, sir!" Jack broke in. He was pale now and trembling.

"It seems an almost conclusive proof, Mr. Russell, and, in addition, the man admitted that he was looking for you and that he had been sent by Jaspao Thapa. But that is not all. As Dorricot was implicated, his box was searched and two documents were found,—one from Jaspao to you, thanking you for the *great services* rendered, by means of which he could raise himself to honour and the British would be driven from before Jytak."

"That's correct, sir. He did write that to me and I could not understand the exaggerated way in which he thanked me for such slight help as I had been able to give him and the other wounded. But that letter was lost, sir! Someone must have found it and replaced it."

The general nodded and proceeded.

"There is worse to come. A written promise signed by Jaspao Thapa on January the first, an easy date to remember,—a promise that you would be released as soon as Dorricot could supply information important enough. *On that date* it has been

proved that Jaspao Thapa did visit the camp to see the surgeon, and that afterwards he went into Dorricot's tent and that pen and ink were then borrowed."

"Yes, sir, Dorricot wrote to me then, enclosing some letters from home. It is an absolutely false charge. Are those all the grounds for suspicion, sir?"

"Are they not enough, my lad?" asked the general, as he scanned the papers before him. "There is one other, I see, though it is not an important one. After leaving camp you meet Jaspao Thapa in the jungle. Does not that look as though you were well acquainted with one another's movements,—it could hardly be a coincidence?"

"Then, sir, what do you make of that accusation of the captured Gurkha,—that he was sent to me by Jaspao, when as a matter of fact Jaspao was with me fighting the robbers?"

"That's a good point," said Ochterlony slowly, and he wrote something across the paper containing the charge. "A very good point, indeed! Singbir Lama declares that he had just come from Jaspao to you, and pretended that Jaspao believed you to be still before Jytak, when you and he were actually together three days' journey away."

"As for the promise of Jaspao Thapa and my pretended letter to him, they are wicked forgeries, sir," Jack emphatically declared. He felt better now that the general had shown himself ready to admit all he could in the boy's favour.

"Do you know anyone likely to do so vile a thing?"

"No sir,—at least—"

"Speak out, my lad."

"No, I won't accuse anyone, sir."

"There is someone then who dislikes you both?"

"Yes, sir, there is."

"Then tell me your suspicions against him."

"I'd rather not, sir, until I know all the circumstances better. I don't want to be unjust to him; it would be just as bad accusing him of doing such a thing if he's innocent as—as my being charged with this. But that Frank Dorricot never dreamt of doing anything dishonourable, I'd stake my life."

"But remember, Russell, that a Gurkha soldier has been captured, and, being searched, a letter from you was found. An enemy of yours—if there be a man so wicked!—might possibly place a forged letter in a tent, but hardly in an enemy's uniform."

"I don't pretend to understand it, General Ochterlony, but I never wrote such a letter. I was never tempted by the Gurkhas to obtain my liberty in that way."

"But look here, sir," Jack added quickly, for he was a shrewd enough lad, "is it not very curious that the one solitary Gurkha scout that our men have caught should happen to have those letters upon him,—letters that had nothing to do with him at all?"

"Evidently he is a great friend and confidant of Jaspao," the general replied.

"And yet he did not know that Jaspao had gone away to join his father?" Jack quickly put in.

For a few moments the general puffed away at

his cigar in silence, watching the smoke as it twined upwards.

"That's another good point," he observed at length. "Yes, that's queer."

"I will not place you under arrest, Mr. Russell," he added presently. "I imagine that the war will be over before long, and then at the court-martial you will be face to face with the witnesses. We attack Deothal to-morrow. If you *have* been a traitor, the best thing you can do will be to die like a Briton, doing your country's work, and so wipe out part of the stain. You may go."

"But, sir, I'd rather keep alive and clear myself entirely from the stain. Thank you, sir, all the same."

Jack turned and left the tent, but in a moment was back again.

"Excuse me, sir," he said, "have you overlooked the fact that Ranjur Thapa set me free before either Dorricot or I could possibly have known that the positions of the outposts were to be changed,—in fact before the change had been decided upon? Unless the Gurkhas are prophets, how could they have guessed that I should soon be in a position to supply them with important information? And if they could foresee future events, why should they have made a bargain with me when they had no need of me?"

"That's another good point, youngster. I'll take a note of both those questions."

"I see it says here," the general continued, "that, judging from your letter to Jaspao, you must have promised the Gurkhas to supply them with any

information that would be of use to them, and that they trusted to your fulfilling the promise on the first occasion. I grant you that does not sound convincing, but still there is the damning evidence of the letters."

"But is it likely that they'd trust one who had already proved himself a traitor to his own countrymen? It's impossible, sir. Besides, they knew full well that I could give the British much more important information about Jytak, and yet they took my word that I would not do so. If they knew that I had promised to sell my own countrymen, would they trust me to be true to enemies? Gurkhas are not very intellectual, but they have a little sense, sir, so is that likely?"

"You are a sharp lad, Russell, and I tell you frankly that it does not seem at all likely to my mind. I hope you will be able to prove your innocence, and shall be glad to help you in any way you may suggest. From that village headman's story you have shown yourself a brave fellow, and not at all the sort to do so vile a thing. Do not despair, my lad, if you are innocent!"

"Why, young'un!" O'Hanlon exclaimed, opening his eyes wide as Jack returned, his flushed face and twitching features giving evidence of the strong emotion under which he was labouring. "Why, what on earth is the matter? Has anything gone wrong?"

Jack sat down and laughed, but there was little mirth in the laugh.

"Everything has gone wrong," he answered slowly.

"You ought not to speak to me. I'm such a blackguard,—so they tell me. I'm under arrest if you want to know,—to all intents and purposes."

"Under arrest! Whatever for?"

"Oh, only for being a traitor and giving information to the enemy in order to get out of Jytak fort."

"Bosh!"

"It's a fact!" Jack bitterly retorted. "I'm going to clear out of your tent, so don't be afraid. Of course no decent person 'ud have anything to do with me."

O'Hanlon rose and stood behind the ensign's seat, placing a hand on either shoulder.

"Jack Russell," he said quietly. "Don't be an ass. I feel inclined to punch your head. If you're in trouble, my boy, tell me all about it. You know that I don't believe you've done anything you need be very much ashamed of. What is it, Jack?"

For a few moments Jack could not answer, then bit by bit his skipper drew the story from him. O'Hanlon whistled softly.

"It's very queer," he muttered, "very queer."

"You think I'm guilty, of course?"

"Don't be bitter, young 'un, and don't stand on your dignity and set your hand against everyone because you fancy that everyone's hand is against you. I don't think anything of the sort, and you know it, my boy."

O'Hanlon held out his hand, and Jack gripped and pressed it.

"Thank you," he said. "It makes me feel a lot better to hear that."

"This much seems clear to me," the captain observed, after balancing the pros and cons for a while, "that in this case there is no mistake that can easily be put right, but a clever conspiracy to ruin you. At least it looks clever from the little I know about it, though we must hope it is merely a clumsy attempt after all."

"I can't help thinking you are right."

"Very good. You say you told the general you knew someone who might wish to harm you? You were quite right not to give the name to him, but to me, in strict confidence, you should. I'm going to act as counsel for the defence, if you'll let me, and I must know everything."

"It's jolly good of you!" the boy declared. "I'll tell you all about it."

He thereupon related the various incidents that he and Frank had connected with Carruthers and Guman Rawat.

"I see," was O'Hanlon's comment. "It certainly looks as though he might have had a hand in it. Now tell me which officer of your regiment you think the best able to help me get evidence,—the most intelligent and energetic fellow, I mean."

Jack named Lieutenant Knowles, and this led him to give an account of the duel, as he related how Knowles had once before got him out of a tight place.

"But what about this Braddish man?" the captain exclaimed. "He also would wish to injure you and your chum, and he may be at the bottom of it after all. At any rate, he may have helped this Carruthers."

Jack made no reply for this idea was a new one. His suspicions had at once centred in Carruthers, and Braddish had been forgotten. Besides, the Eurasian had parted with him in a friendly way, expressing penitence, whereas Braddish had not attempted to conceal his hatred. Captain O'Hanlon had meanwhile lighted a cheroot, and was grappling with the problem in his own way. Presently he observed:

"I'll write to Knowles. I've an idea, but it's not a brilliant one, so I won't say what it is. Cheer up, Jack, you'll come through all right with flying colours, so never say die. Don't be so down in the mouth."

"It ain't so easy to cheer up with this cloud hanging over you,—everyone ready to point you out as a traitor. You can't think what it feels like. And if I get potted to-morrow, my name may never be cleared, and won't that be nice for the pater and mater!"

The ensign also thought of another person whom he did not mention.

"It will come out all right, young 'un. Now turn in and get some sleep, for we shall be stirring early to-morrow, and you won't be fit if you worry."

Jack obeyed, but he could not sleep; he could think of nothing save the impending dishonour. Then with a shock a new thought came to him. How long was it since he had last prayed to God in spite of his good resolutions? O'Hanlon was out, so he would do it now and ask for his good name to be cleared.

Then came a second thought, and with it a feeling as of ice-cold water running down his spine. It

showed him Jack Russell as a coward and a sneak —vices he detested above all others!—and this in spite of his fine fighting with robber-bands and killing of wild elephants. For before deciding to rise from the mattress to pray he had first calculated that there would be no one to see him do this, and what was that but arrant cowardice? And secondly, he neglected his Maker and Saviour except when he was in trouble and wanted something from Him.

The boy recognized the meanness and was miserable. He resolved not to pray now that he wished to, as a punishment for himself. And there he was wrong, for in his inmost soul the reason was not altogether repentance, but rather pride; he was too proud to ask a favour of his Heavenly Father after having shown such ingratitude. Before long a better, higher feeling prevailed. He rose to his knees and begged for forgiveness and greater courage,—not for his own restoration to light-heartedness.

He lay down again, and his trouble now seemed to press less heavily; in a few moments he was fast asleep.

CHAPTER XIX

VICTORY CROWNS THE BRITISH ARMS AT LAST

SILENTLY and swiftly the British columns moved out to the storming of Deothal, and before the defending force were fully awake to their danger our fellows were swarming up the mountain. There was no panic among the Gurkhas! With determination equalling that of the British, they steadily fired into the advancing ranks until, seeing that their assailants could not be deterred in this way, the fierce mountaineers determined to rely upon close quarters and cold steel.

Then took place a fight worthy of the best traditions of both warrior races. For a long time the issue was doubtful, but finally the stormers prevailed; the peak was gained and the defenders dislodged, fighting hard so long as there remained a gleam of hope.

Entrenched in a stockade on the summit, a small body of Gurkhas under the officer commanding the Deothal position, refused either to retire or to yield. With courage made fiercer by despair, they continued to shoot and cut down the victors until O'Hanlon's company of fusiliers, maddened by their losses and by this desperate resistance, made a wild rush, scrambled over the stockade, and were

in amongst the Gurkhas with the bayonet. O'Hanlon was cut down as he vaulted over, but was up again and, changing his sword from the right hand to the left, was quickly laying about him. A dozen Irishmen fell within the stockade, and what remained of the defenders still fought like rats in a corner.

The commandant of Deothal was on his knees, unable to stand, and wounded in at least six places, when Jack and three or four others rushed upon him.

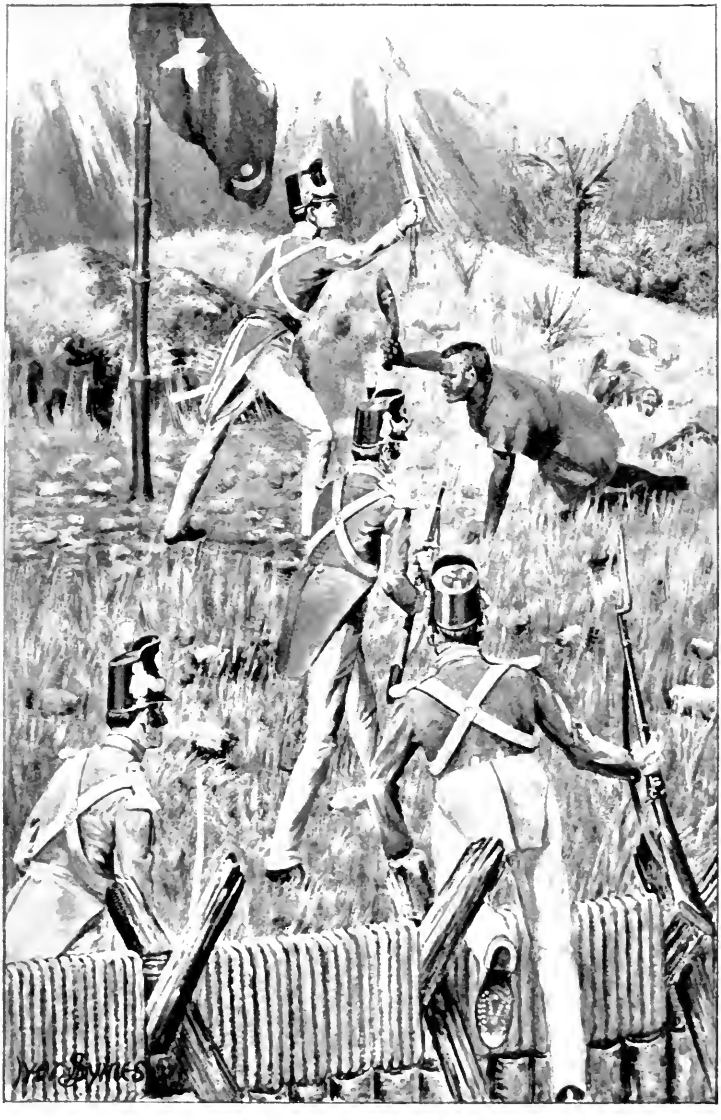
"Surrender!" cried Ensign Russell in Gurkhali.

The wounded man turned upon them and, lunging forward on his knees, cut viciously at the ensign. Jack had not time to spring aside, and his career would have ended then and there had not Larry jumped in front and received the kukri stroke. With a fearful gash in the side the devoted O'Grady sank to the earth. Instantly three bayonets were at the Gurkha's breast and in another moment he would have been a corpse, when Jack threw himself bodily upon the man, and seizing the wrist that held the kukri, he kept him down. For he had recognised the face as that of Gambir Sing.

Weakened by his wounds Gambir was no match for the ensign, and though he struggled manfully he was tightly held.

"Do not kill him!" Jack cried to the Irishmen who were poking around with their bayonets, trying to get in a thrust without hurting their officer.

Sullivan, who was on his knees attending to Larry's almost hopeless wounds, had recognized the Gurkha officer at the same time. Leaning over, he



"SURRENDER!" CRIED ENSIGN RUSSELL.

p. 240.

wrenched the kukri from the enfeebled hand, and stayed the fury of his countrymen.

"Thou hast fought like a hero, Gambir Sing," said Jack. "There is no disgrace in being made prisoner now."

Gambir grinned in recognition and fainted away. The day was won and Deothal was ours.

General Ochterlony lost no time in making the best of his advantage. He saw that earthworks were thrown up all round without delay, and placing batteries upon the hill, he got ready to bombard the enemy. Though a less brave leader would have lost heart, Amar Sing was not done with yet. Seeing, however, that all was over unless he could dislodge the British from this peak, he made a fierce attack on the 16th with two thousand Gurkhas led by Bhagti Sing Thapa, to whom the post of honour had been given by reason of his conspicuous gallantry.

The enemy advanced to the assault in a semi-circle along the ridge, with the idea of turning the British flanks. Amar Sing and our friend Jaspao took their places by the Gurkha standard, urging and animating their brave men while the fighting surged fiercely around. Up to the belching mouths of the cannon the fearless Gurkhas charged, cutting down the gunners at their posts and attempting time after time to break through the rampart of British bayonets. Repeatedly swept away by the showers of grape, new men took the places of their dead comrades, and for a time neither side could be said to gain or lose. But the terrific cannonade

and continuous and steady volleys of musketry proved too much even for their dogged valour. Their ranks became thinner and thinner and the old general saw that the day was lost. Collecting the heroes who remained, he retired, still fighting, into the fortress of Malaon, and there Ochterlony penned him in. This was what the British general had been quietly planning.

While searching for the wounded, the victors found the body of the gallant Bhagti Sing Thapa, and they showed honour to the brave dead by sending the corpse, wrapped in shawls, to his mourning countrymen. To this day his memory is honoured in Nepal as a hero of heroes; his deeds still serve to rouse the hearts of patriots to a noble emulation of his courage, and to be called "as brave as Bhagti Sing" is the highest ambition of a Gurkha.

On the following day, in sight of both armies, his body was reverently burned; and his two wives, determined to follow their lord's fortunes in another world, insisted on their right to perish with him. Never did Ensign Russell forget that dreadful and touching sight.

The British were convinced that the war was now over, but Amar Sing Thapa continued the hopeless struggle, though food and water were scarce, and his army in Malaon reduced to two hundred men. Over and over again he scornfully rejected inducements to surrender, though all honours of war were offered to him. Finally, even his own brave captains saw the hopelessness of prolonging the unequal fight, and pointing out that the numbers and powerful

cannon of the British were bound to overwhelm them, they begged him to treat with General Ochterlony while they were yet alive and able to fight again for Nepal. But the lion-hearted hero still refused. Like our own Sir Richard Grenville he would have preferred death for himself, his family, and all his host, rather than incur the disgrace of surrender.

Owing to the heavy loss sustained by the Gurkhas and to the fact that what remained of Amar Sing's force were safely penned in Malaon, communication with Martindell's column was easy; and one evening as Jack came off duty, saluting his captain as he entered the tent with:

"Well, skipper, how's the wounded arm?" O'Hanlon informed him that he had just received a note from Lieutenant Knowles.

"I wrote to him the same night that you told me the history," said he, "after you had gone to sleep, and I was able to send it a day or two later. I advised him to keep an eye on your friends, Braddish and Carruthers, and especially on the latter's precious valet, in order to find out whether they appeared to have any dealings with Singbir Lama, the Gurkha prisoner."

"You're a brick!" interrupted Jack.

"Here is his letter. You see that, having heard from Dorricot of this Carruthers business, he had already thought of doing this, but nothing has come of it. He writes that they do not appear to take the slightest interest in the prisoner. Knowles is inclined to suspect Braddish, who, it appears,

professes openly that he has no doubt you are guilty, and declares that you and Dorricot are just the sort he would have suspected as most capable of such infamy."

"I'm much obliged to him," said Jack.

"Whereas Carruthers asserts that you two would have been the last he should have suspected, and says he feels sure you will be able to put it all right."

"Well done, Carruthers! I told Frank Dorricot he was too rough on him. It's very decent of you both to take so much trouble."

"Bosh! lad, Here's a note from Knowles for yourself."

Jack read his friend's message with great pleasure. Knowles expressed his complete belief in the innocence of both lads, and bade them keep their spirits up, as truth would out. He also informed Jack that he was about to join Ochterlony with three companies from different regiments, as there was no fighting around Jytak at present, and this small reinforcement could help to close in Malaon. Major Brooks and he had obtained permission for Dorricot to accompany him, seeing how miserable the ensign was with this charge hanging over him and everyone knowing. When they would arrive he could not tell.

This was a piece of welcome news. Frank would of course be able to tell him more than he knew at present of the circumstances. Leaving O'Hanlon, he made for the hospital tent to visit O'Grady. Larry had been nearly done for, but his fine con-

stitution had stood him in good stead and he was progressing famously. Jack had not neglected to visit the preserver of his life on every possible occasion, and had shown his gratitude in many ways. He was not a good hand at expressing all he felt towards the brave fellow who had been ready to lay down his life for another, in eloquent language, nevertheless Larry was quick-witted enough to see through the young officer's shyness and to appreciate his disjointed thanks perhaps more than he would have done any number of fine speeches.

"Well, Larry, me bhoy," was his greeting, "have they plugged the hole up yet? It's two days since I saw you last, and I see you're looking stronger already."

"I does be doin' purty middlin', thank ye, sorr. How's Misther Gambir?"

"Gambir Sing? Oh, he's as tough as whipcord. Half his wounds would have done for me, but he'll pull through all right and live to fight another day."

"It bates everythin' for quareness that it should ha' bin him that kilt me, does it not so? Bedad, here come's the sargint."

Sullivan had entered the tent on the same errand.

"The top av the morrnin' to ye, sorr. God save you, Larry jew'l."

"God save ye, kindly, sargint. We wuz spakin' of Gambir,—your brother, bedad."

"Oi ha' just bin visitin' wid the gossoon in the other tint. Faix, he's a plucky bhoy, and himself

not the size av anything at all! He does be bearin' us no ill-will, barrin' that he shtill hopes owld Amar 'ull extarminate us intirely, and then he'll die paceful. He's a brave man, and as I towld him to console him, he's fought and bled for his counthry, and may be he'll soon be able to say he's died for it. Arrah! Larry, ye lazy scamer, get up and come do your wurrk like an honust sojer bhoy, 'stead of lyin' raycreatin' there like a lord, livin' on the fat av the land and atin' custhards an' port wine."

"Sorra wan av me knows what port wine tastes like, ye ontruthful man, and as for custards ye're kindly welkum to all I iver sot eyes on. 'Tis you should take shame, ye skulkin' vagabone, purtindin' to fight for your king an' counthry an' divil a scratch to show for it at all, at all."

Both Larry and Gambir continued to improve, and the days passed slowly and quietly, the Gurkhas' situation becoming more and more desperate; for them all hope of succour was at an end, as the other three British columns, after varying fortunes, were now more than holding their own and were able to prevent any attempt at co-operation in favour of the brave old general, who still refused every condition of surrender, however honourable the terms might be.

One final sortie, a feeble attempt to break through the stifling circle of enemies now surrounding them, was made by the besieged, and though the battle was not general, merely a small portion of the British troops being engaged, the fighting waged furiously enough near the posts at which the Tipperary Fusi-

liers were stationed. A party of these, including our friend Jack, were occupying a *nullah* * in front of the Gurkha line of advance, and thence they kept up a constant, but ineffective musket fire. The Nepalese advanced eagerly towards the *nullah*, now running from boulder to boulder, now creeping swiftly on hands and knees under the protection of bush and stones, the hurried fire of the fusiliers rarely touching any of these minute moving targets. Suddenly a small force of Gurkhas poured into the ravine from the right flank, having been enabled by the broken nature of the ground, so well adapted to their methods of warfare, to make a circuit unobserved of the British. As they dashed upon the Irishmen the attacking party in front boldly left their cover and rushed to the support of their comrades.

The half company of fusiliers was in a tight place and had no choice but to give ground until the reinforcements hurrying up from the sepoy regiment close at hand should reach them. The men pressed back up the side of the ravine, fighting strongly as they retired. They could hear the shouts of the sepoys hurrying to their assistance and wondered whether they would be in time. Just at the top of the *nullah* the man in front of Jack stumbled over a loose stone that slipped from under him. The poor fellow rolled down, and coming into collision with Jack, knocked him also off his feet. The ensign, more fortunate than the Irishman, who rolled some

* A ravine—the dry bed of a river.

distance, merely fell a few feet and there stayed dazed and only half conscious, for his head had struck an embedded boulder with considerable force; luckily the stone was smooth and round, not jagged. The Gurkhas, seeing the numbers of the sepoys and fearing to be caught in a trap, had already commenced the retirement, when three or four stragglers, observing the fall of the two white men, ran back to despatch them. Incensed by the long siege and their privations they were in no mood for taking prisoners or giving quarter, and Ensign Russell, with horror-stricken gaze that he could not avert, looked down on the death of his comrade, fascinated and as powerless to move as if in a dream.

Having quickly accomplished their purpose the slayers ran towards him. He saw the gleam of the cruel kukris, and there flashed across his mind that other scene where Jaspao had spared his life, and then came the recollection of the Dashera Festival, and again he saw the glimmer of the steel and the red stream that followed, and he vaguely wondered whether the goats had felt as he felt now. Suddenly he realised that the fierce men were within ten yards of him, and the dreamlike sensation melted away. He reached for his sword; it had slipped from his grasp when he fell; he tried to rise;—it was too late, a razor-edged blade was descending upon him. He shivered, and a picture of the buffalo collapsing after Jaspao's stroke flashed before his eyes. Then a streak of silver light darted in front of him and his foremost assailant fell. Again that streak shimmered above him and a second Gurkha dropped, run

through the heart, and Jack became aware of a tall form, sword in hand, confronting his remaining opponents. The dark little men sprang like wild-cats upon his rescuer, and while yet another bit the dust, the fourth cut the swordsman over the right arm, causing him to drop his weapon and rendering the sword-arm useless. By this time Jack had recovered most of his scattered wits and, raising his pistol, he shot the Gurkha dead. He then turned towards the man to whom he owed his life, and found that he had already sunk feebly on a boulder, looking white and ghastly.

Jack gave a start. It was his old enemy Braddish! Seizing one of the keen skinning knives from a dead Gurkha's scabbard, he slit open the coat-sleeve of his rescuer, bared the arm, and quickly and gently bound up the cut to arrest the flow of blood.

"Thank you," murmured the wounded man, lifting his eyes to the ensign's face. Now, for the first time, he knew for whose life he had risked his own, and a look, half of surprise, half of dismay, came into his eyes. He gave a gasp and made as if to rise to his feet.

"How can I thank you?" murmured Jack, breaking the awkward silence. "I—I—"

"Don't trouble," the duellist gruffly interrupted. "I did not know it was you, or I'm d——d if I'd have risked my skin."

Jack's face fell. He was greatly troubled and ill at ease.

"I'm very sorry," he stammered. "At least, I mean—that is to say I'm very very sorry you're

hurt, and that you consider me an enemy. I—I beg your pardon for any injury I have ever done you. May I help you along?"

He took Braddish's uninjured arm, unheeding a gesture meant to prevent him, and made his rescuer rest his weight upon his shoulder. The incident had passed unnoticed by their comrades, as Jack and the unfortunate soldier had been behind the others. The fusiliers and sepoys were how hotly engaged a quarter of a mile away, pursuing the routed foe.

"Yes, you need not flatter yourself," muttered Braddish, speaking as much to himself as to Jack, "that I saved you through any heroic desire to repay good for evil. I happen to have a younger brother engaged somewhere hereabouts, and as you lay on the ground I thought you might possibly be he, so I jumped down."

"It was splendid of you anyway," Jack quietly made answer. "Won't you shake hands and let bygones be bygones? I should be proud to do so."

"You are very kind," Braddish replied with a sneer, "but I'm rather particular. I prefer to have friends who are not in the habit of betraying their country. I won't say I'm sorry I pulled you out of that hole,—though I wouldn't have risked it had I known; but as for shaking hands—well, I haven't forgiven you yet, so it would be nothing less than humbug."

"I'm very sorry," repeated the ensign, swallowing his resentment, "but I want you to know that I'm downright grateful, and whatever I can do for you

anytime, I shall try to do it. Please lean your weight more heavily,—may I not carry you?"

The tall lieutenant looked down upon the ensign and laughed.

"I thought you were still before Jytak," observed Jack, changing the subject.

"I only arrived here last night, and it may interest you to know that that young cub who is your partner in treachery, is here also."

"Excuse me," answered Jack stiffly. "You may call me any name you like, but please understand that Dorricot is no one's partner in treachery."

"Indeed, you'll perhaps find it hard to convince them of that at the court-martial. I don't mind saying that I prefer to have saved your life rather than Dorricot's."

"I'm sorry you feel like that, and I don't think it quite fair. I dare say I didn't treat you too well, but Dorricot did nothing that wasn't honourable. I ought not to have talked so much and then it would have been more easy to refuse you without giving offence. Frank did right to check me."

"I've no doubt you were both right—beautifully right, I'll confess that. You may imagine I've been thinking of little else since that affair, and I don't love you any the more."

The fight was already over, and as they approached the camp, Braddish curtly told Jack he could dispense with his company.

"I do thank you with all my heart," the boy whispered as he turned away, "and I hope you won't always feel the same towards me."

CHAPTER XX

JACK AND FRANK ARE TRIED BY COURT-MARTIAL

ENSIGN Russell quickly made an opportunity to seek out his old chum and was not long in tracking him. Seeing his quarry in the distance, he hailed: "Frank, ahoy!"

Dorricot turned and hastened towards his friend, and tried to raise an answering grin with which to greet him. But the attempt was a dismal failure, for the blow had hit Frank even harder than Jack, because in the army before Malaon not more than half a dozen persons had even heard of the accusation against our hero, and even the few who had heard were all men who wished him well. Whereas the treachery of Ensign Dorricot was common talk in the other column, and therefore he had had more to bear. Frank's face was glum in spite of his attempt to appear light-hearted.

"Hullo! my fighting cock," he gave greeting, "I've been looking for you everywhere. Still alive?"

Being British lads they did not fall upon one another's necks, nor did they even shake hands, but each knew that it was good to see his friend again.

"I say, Jack," Frank hurriedly went on, "what do you think? Your old friend, that beast Braddish, is here."

Jack at once plunged into the subject that was occupying his mind to the exclusion of all else, and recounted the story of his narrow escape, his rescue by their old enemy, and the subsequent conversation,—that is as well as he could remember, for as he hardly knew what he was saying at the time, he could hardly be expected to remember it some hours later.

"Well done, Braddish!" Dorricot heartily exclaimed. "Well done! He's not half such a beast as I thought. Do you know, Jack, I like him better for being honest,—he could have made himself out such a hero, you see, and have taken credit for saving his enemy's life."

"Yet suppose it should turn out that he has played this vile trick on us, and forged those letters!"

"Oh, drop it, Jack; let's talk about something else. I'm sick of that subject."

"Still, old man, we've got to talk it over and try to get to the bottom of it."

"Well, Braddish has had nothing to do with that job, so don't get the idea into your thick skull. It's Carruthers' work, don't make any mistake about it."

"What ought I to do? Braddish shows pretty plainly that he doesn't want to have anything more to do with me, and I can't thrust my affections and displays of gratitude upon him. I tell you, I don't like to think of letting it pass as he evidently wants. It was a fine thing to come leaping down that *nullah* to engage four men at once, and I can't shut my eyes to what would have happened if he hadn't arrived."

"Write to him," Frank suggested, "it's easier than speaking."

"You'd have thought so if you'd heard me trying to thank him just now, for I talked the worst kind of rot I've ever done in my life."

"That's saying a lot, old man."

"Well, let it be a letter—though I should have thought we two had had enough of letters!—Well, what shall I say?"

"Tell him how grateful you are, and when that's done I don't see anything else for it but to wait and try to do him a good turn some day. Judging from what you've told me, I can't think he hates you as he used to—it's not in human nature to hate anyone whose life you've risked your own for. He certainly doesn't seem fond of me though, and I don't wonder, for I must have been considerably bumptious."

"You must help me compose the letter."

"Fire away then."

After many attempts and great destruction of paper, the boys considered the following letter as little unsatisfactory as they might hope to produce:—

"Dear Lieutenant Braddish,

"I cannot allow your noble act to pass without a further expression of thanks. I hope you will forgive my troubling you with this, after what you said. Looking back on the affair that led to our quarrell, I cannot but feel that I was rather conceited and high-handed, and I trust you will forgive

me for that. In any case rest assured of my heart-felt gratitude.

"Sincerely yours,

"JOHN COLLINGWOOD RUSSELL."

"How do you spell 'quarrel'?" the scribe enquired. "Two 'l's, ain't there?"

"I believe so."

"And 'conceited'? Is it 'ie' or 'ei'?"

"What's the good of asking me, I never could spell?"

"I think it's 'ie',—no it ain't, it's 'ei', I do believe; at any rate I'll leave it at that."

Jack called Nathu Sunar, the ex-brigand, and gave him the note with instructions regarding its delivery.

"Who's your nigger?" Frank asked. "He reminds me of Guman Rawat."

"Why, he is rather like him, though it hadn't struck me before."

He proceeded to relate how the man had come into his employ.

No sooner was the note despatched than our hero regretted having written, and longed to recall it, feeling how silly, and inadequate to express his meaning it was. He was too honest to apologize for the principal cause that had led to the duel because he knew that he had been right and that Braddish *had* acted in a dishonourable manner, and to have apologized for the relatively unimportant offence of abruptness in refusing, seemed a hollow mockery. He now saw in the letter an uncalled-

for reminder to his old foe that he had been in the wrong, and he feared that its effect would only make the sore rankle. He tried to console himself with the reflection that the recipient might take it in the spirit in which it was sent.

He awaited a reply with fear and anxiety, but none came, and he never ascertained what effect his attempt to conciliate had had.

Both Jack and Frank spread abroad the story of of the rescue until it reached the ears of those in authority, for they were determined that the wounded officer should received full credit for his courage. Though he was soon about again with arm in sling, Jack saw little of him, and the first time they met Braddish flushed a deep red, seemed to hesitate, and then calmly ignored the boy.

At an early opportunity a council of war was convened by the two ensigns, and Captain O'Hanlon was introduced to Ensign Dorricot and *Lieutenant* Knowles. The former pushed Jack on one side, exclaiming:

"Go away, little boy. You don't know how to introduce people. Captain O'Hanlon—*Captain* Knowles."

Jack opened his eyes as he heard his friend's new title.

"You've got your company then, Knowles?" he said. "I congratulate you. I'm very glad."

Frank proceeded to relate how the Gurkha, Singbir Lama, had been captured when hanging round the outskirts of the British camp, how the papers had been found upon him, and how the remaining evidence had come to light.

"Colonel Gregory has refused to speak to me since," he concluded. "Brooks and one or two others have been very decent though, and they maintain that there has been some mistake. But as for the others—ugh! It's been ghastly, Jack, having to live among fellows who believe you to be guilty and who look at you as if you were a cobra."

"They don't all think that," Knowles interposed. "The men of your company won't believe a word against you, nor my fellows against Jack."

"*They* put it down to Braddish," said Frank, with a grimace, "and that's where they make a mistake."

"Dorricot has got Carruthers on the brain," Knowles declared. "He won't hear of any other solution."

"And you'll find I'm right. But I'd give anything to have it over! I wish this plucky old Gurkha would have some common-sense and surrender."

For yet another week the starving garrison held out, until at length the Gurkha officers over-ruled their leader, and Amar Sing, having been assured of the full honours of war, finally gave way. Filled with appreciation of such splendid heroism as had been shown, General Ochterlony allowed him to march out with his arms, colours, guns and personal property, "*in consideration of the bravery, skill, and fidelity with which he had defended the country entrusted to his charge*," as the British general stated in his report to Government. Jytak being powerless to stand after Malaon had fallen, Ranjur Thapa also capitulated on the same honourable terms that had been granted to his father.

The Nepal Government, convinced at last that they could not hold their own against the might of Britain, now showed a readiness to treat. The British were only too glad to put an end to this prolonged struggle, so expensive to them in men and money. By the treaty of Segowlie the Gurkhas retired from the territories they had invaded, and the frontiers of the two countries were definitely marked so that no similar misunderstanding might arise again.

As soon as Jytak surrendered General Martindell's column was broken up, and the headquarters of the 162nd joined their comrades under Ochterlony, preparatory to departure for Gorakhpore. Singbir Lama, the captured Gurkha, was brought with them and as all the other witnesses were on the spot, the court-martial was at once proceeded with. Jack and Frank were now formally placed under arrest and their swords were taken from them. Captain Crellin of the 162nd unwillingly acted as counsel for the prosecution, while Captain Knowles defended. General Ochterlony decided to preside himself. Recollecting Jack Russell's pertinent arguments and pointed enquiries when first accused of the crime, and secretly cherishing the conviction that the boy was no traitor, but a brave and honourable soldier, he intimated that the accused could speak freely and ask any question they liked. In fact the informality of the proceedings shocked the martinet soul of Colonel Gregory, one of the court.

A corporal and three soldiers first gave evidence respecting the capture of Singbir Lama after having chased him for some distance. Major Brooks

proved the finding of the papers upon the person of the captive and in Dorricot's tent, and Captain Crellin read aloud the incriminating documents in the order of their dates.

The first of these was the letter found in Frank's box, dated January 1st, 1815. It was written in *Urdu* and appeared to have been Dorricot's composition and handwriting.

"*I, Jaspao Thapa, on behalf of my brother, Ranjur Thapa, commanding the Jytak Force, do hereby swear on my kukri, as witnessed by Ensign Dorricot, that in consideration of the information supplied by him, his friend Ensign Russell shall be well treated and his life spared. Also, that should any valuable information be subsequently given, the aforesaid Ensign Russell shall be liberated.*

(Signed) JASPAO THAPA."

One or two of the officers present who understood *Urdu* well, could not resist a smile at the manner in which this imitation of legal phraseology had been translated.

"You deny all knowledge of that letter, Ensign Dorricot, I understand?" Knowles asked.

"I do," Frank replied, and continued—"Excuse me, gentlemen, but it's hard enough to be called a traitor, but to make me out an idiot as well is adding insult to injury. Even if I had betrayed the army, why on earth should I ask the man to sign such an utterly worthless document, except as evidence against myself? It couldn't bind him."

This thought had already entered the minds of more than one of the officers constituting the court. Captain Crellin next read Jaspao's letter to Russell, and this Jack admitted to be genuine, giving the explanation he had previously supplied to the general. The signatures of the two letters were compared and pronounced identical.

Then came the alleged letter from Russell to Jaspao, dated the day on which the latter's messenger had come into the British camp bringing the present to Jack. This contained an account of the change in the disposition of the outposts, and Jack emphatically pronounced it a forgery. He acknowledged that the handwriting resembled his own very closely, and when passed round the court and compared with one of his notes to Frank, the unanimous opinion was that the same hand had written both. Our hero glanced from one stern, set face to another, and saw, with sinking heart, that the case looked black against them. The majority were undoubtedly convinced of their guilt.

"Did Dorricot raise any objection to the searching of his belongings?" Knowles asked of the witness.

"Not the slightest. He was perfectly willing and appeared dumbfoundered when the letters were brought to light. If he was acting I never saw anything so perfect."

"Did he know that the letter just read had been found on Singbir Lama, before he gave permission for his box to be searched?"

"He did."

"And would he have had time in the interval to have gone to his tent and destroyed the incriminating papers?"

"He would have had plenty of time, as the idea of searching him did not occur to us for some hours afterwards."

"That certainly does not look like guilt, gentlemen."

To the astonishment of the accused, Ensign Carruthers was next called upon. In reply to Captain Crellin's questions he admitted having overheard Russell and Dorricot discuss the letter in which Jaspao thanked the first-named for the great services he had rendered, and added that he was sure they were only joking.

"Tell the court the exact words you overheard, and they can judge for themselves," Crellin instructed him.

With apparent reluctance Carruthers deposed that as he was entering the mess-room he heard the words, *Sold your own countrymen to the enemy.* They had Jaspao's letter before them and his messenger was waiting. They seemed very uncomfortable when they saw him, and as they appeared anxious to get rid of him he left. In reply to Knowles he admitted that he and the accused had not been good friends, and that that might well be the cause of their anxiety to be rid of him, and also volunteered the statement that the ill-will was due more to his fault than to theirs. The witness assured the court in the most earnest manner that he thought at the time they were only joking, and he still hoped so.

He did not believe they were capable of doing anything so dishonourable.

As the prisoners admitted the general accuracy of Carruthers' evidence, Knowles did not cross-examine the Eurasian. Jack gazed at the next witness with great interest, for it was the first occasion on which he had ever seen him. Singbir Lama was dressed in a uniform similar to that worn by Jaspao's men, and he appeared to be a Khas, his features being rather less Mongolian than the average Magar or Gurung. Singbir—giving his evidence in Urdu—deposed that the letters found upon him had been entrusted to him by his captain, Jaspao Thapa, with orders to put them away in some place of safety, but this he had forgotten to do. His captain had sent him with a note to Ensign Russell and had told him to deliver it, secretly if possible, lest the English should suspect.

"Where is that letter?" Knowles asked.

"As soon as I saw that I should be caught I tore it up and threw it away. The others I had forgotten altogether."

"When did Jaspao Thapa send you?"

"That same morning," was the Gurkha's reply.

"Have you previously been sent to Ensign Russell?" asked Crellin, who, like Knowles, knew *Urdu* fairly well.

"No, sahib. I hope he will not get into trouble, or Jaspao Thapa will surely slay me."

This closed the evidence for the prosecution, and Lieutenant Knowles called for "Sergeant Sullivan!"

"Here, sorr!" and the big Irishman stepped to the witness stand.

"Now, sergeant," Knowles addressed him, "we should like to hear your account of the meeting with Jaspao Thapa in the jungle. It is suggested, I believe, that Ensign Russell and he had arranged to meet, and that it was not accidental.

"Then, sorr, I do not know an ax'dunt whin I seen wan. An' is ut Misther Russell they dar' to say 'thraitor' to? Divil a fut wud we ha' placed in the jungle had ut bin left to him, but we overperswayded him, and small blame to him."

"Your officer would have kept to the track then, if you had not made the request?"

"Faix! that's a thrue wurrd. And if your honours had bin lucky enough to have seen that Gurkhy's face whin they met, and how his kukri wuz out in the twinklin' av a bedpost, sure 'tis not doubting me wurrds you'd be. 'Twas no preconsarted meetin' at all, at all."

"Do you remember the date?" Jack's counsel asked.

"The siventeenth av March, your honour."

"How can you remember it so readily?"

"Bedad, sorr, I am an Oirishman, though may be I do not spake like wan."

The court smiled.

"Not in the least, sergeant," said Knowles. "But I see you mean that it was on St. Patrick's day. Very good, sergeant, that is all."

"Thank ye kindly, sorr," Sullivan turned towards General Ochterlony and continued:

"And if I may make so bowld, gineral, I shud like to say that thim who does be belavin' as Misther Russell 'ud go for to do such a blaggardly thrick, have not had the priv'lidge av bein' wid him in a toight corner, or it's not *his* carackther they'd be doubtin'. He'd scorrn to do ut, your honour, and the curse of Crum'll on the villain that's thryin' to ruin him!"

"That is not evidence," said Colonel Gregory sharply.

The sergeant left the witness-stand without suffering a reproof from the general, who saw that his testimony, if not quite in order, was sincere. Knowles now asked that Major Brooks might be recalled.

"On what date was Singbir Lama brought into camp?" he asked.

"On March 19th," Brooks instantly replied. "Here is the note I took at the time."

"And he declared that he had just come from Jaspao Thapa, who, it seems, had left Jytak a few days previously?"

"That was the tale he told us."

"Thank you, major."

Jack's defender intimated that he had no further witness to call, so Captain Crellin rose to address the court.

"Gentlemen," he began, "my task is a painful one and I have been hoping that evidence would be brought forward to exonerate the accused. But it must reluctantly be admitted that the defence lies chiefly in appeals to probability. 'Is it likely,' so Captain Knowles will presently ask you, 'Is it

likely that Mr. Dorricot would ask for such a document to be signed?' 'Is it likely that the Gurkhas would release a British officer on such terms?' 'Is it likely,' he will ask, 'that this Singbir Lama could be a confidant of Jaspao Thapa and yet be unaware that he had quitted Jytak?' I will admit at once that none of these things appear probable, but unlikely things frequently happen, and these appeals to probability can be matched on the other side. Is it not also improbable, I will reply to Captain Knowles, that the Gurkhas—a brave but semi-barbarous race—would treat a prisoner so well as they have treated Mr. Russell unless they had some object in view? Or is it likely that they would set him free unconditionally after having refused ransom? And may not this Singbir Lama, for some reason that he may wish to conceal,—may he not have neglected or forgotten his service to Jaspao Thapa and delayed the errand to Mr. Russell. He may have been absent for some days on business of his own that he does not wish his master to know, and in the meanwhile Jaspao leaves Jytak."

Captain Crellin paused and it was obvious that his suggestion had its effect. The ensign became pale and Knowles bit his lip and looked worried, for his adversary had demolished his best point. The speaker resumed his argument.

"Now against these weak suggestions of improbability we produce an array of hard facts. Take first those points that the accused are unable to deny. A letter from Jaspao Thapa to Ensign Russell is found, thanking him for the great services

rendered, by means of which the writer hoped to be able to raise himself to honour. He had no doubt *that they would soon be able to drive the British away.*

"Gentlemen, two nights after this was written, Jaspao Thapa did raise himself to honour by leading a successful assault, and a blow *was* inflicted on the British in a way that suggests that someone *had rendered great* services to the Gurkhas. Put two and two together. *Is it likely*—to use the phrase that is sure to be employed by the defence,—that the writer of that epistle was alluding to a few bandages or a bottle of quinine?

"Again, take the conversation overheard by Mr. Carruthers, admitted as accurate and drawn from him with evident reluctance. That evidence is damning. They spoke of selling their countrymen to the enemy, and had that letter before them.

"Then we come to the document signed by Jaspao Thapa on the first of January in Dorricot's tent. That is termed a forgery, but who would forge such a paper? And then the letter from Mr. Russell to Jaspao, plainly giving—or rather, selling—the information respecting the outposts. This is also called a forgery, but Mr. Russell cannot indicate wherein the writing differs from his. And remember that these were not found lying about camp where some imaginary ill-wisher might have placed them, but on the person of a Gurkha foeman captured by chance. Gentlemen, the evidence is overwhelming. I shall say no more."

CHAPTER XXI

JASPAO THAPA PROVES A FRIEND IN NEED

CAPTAIN CRELLIN sat down amidst an ominous silence. Knowles, looking far more nervous and troubled than when standing ready to defend himself from Braddish on the morning of the duel, rose to reply, meaning to bring forward and emphasize the points Jack had previously raised before General Ochterlony. But he felt that Crellin had cut the ground from under his feet, and that his defence *did* lie, not in evidence, but in such appeals of "*Is it likely?*" as the prosecution had indicated. Jack saw with dismay that the faces of those who were soon to pronounce judgment were hard and stern, and that his and Frank's guilt was practically decided. Glancing round the tent, the boy's gaze fell upon his old friend or enemy—he hardly knew which—Guman Rawat, and he fancied he detected signs of satisfaction and triumph in the man's eyes. He vaguely wondered how the Asiatic had managed to get inside and why he had not been turned out. Probably, he concluded, Carruthers had contrived it on some pretext or other.

Before Knowles could begin his speech for the defence, O'Hanlon hastily entered the room and whispered to him. The face of Captain Knowles suddenly cleared.

"Another witness—an important one—has just arrived, General Ochterlony," he announced. "I trust that it is not too late for him to be heard?"

Crellin sprang to his feet before the general could reply.

"I have certainly no objection, sir," he said, "and I hope the permission will be granted."

The president concurring, O'Hanlon left the place, and presently returned bringing with him none other than Jaspao Thapa. Jack's heart gave a bound of delight as, heedless of ceremony, the Gurkha approached him and shook hands. Saluting the court he then stood fearlessly facing the assembly.

"Gentlemen," said Knowles, "this is Jaspao Thapa whose name has been mentioned so often. Unknown to me Captain O'Hanlon sent to beseech him to appear before you and throw some light on this mystery."

"I object to this man's evidence," Colonel Gregory declared, rising from his seat. "He is one of the parties involved in this discreditable transaction, and his only object can be to defeat the ends of justice. It is altogether irregular."

The president, however, overruled the objection and signified his willingness to admit the fresh evidence, so Jaspao swore on his kukri-blade to speak nothing but the truth. His fearless, good-natured expression told in his favour, and Jack turned involuntarily towards Carruthers' servant to compare the straightforward look of the one with the shiftiness of the other. But Guman Rawat had either left or been turned out. Captain Knowles placed

before the witness the document bearing his signature and dated the first of January, 1815.

"Did you sign that, Jaspao Sahib?" he asked.

"I did not. What does it all mean?"

The Gurkha stared at the paper with a laughably puzzled expression, and his lips moved as though he were laboriously spelling it to himself. The letter to Jack was then submitted.

"Yes, I wrote that," he replied. "I remember well because of the trouble it gave me. I am more used to handle the kukri than the pen, and would rather stalk a man-eater than write a letter."

"Will you kindly explain it to the court? You speak of great services rendered by Ensign Russell, by whose means you would raise yourself to honour. What were those great services?"

Jaspao opened his almond-shaped eyes.

"Russell Sahib was very good to our wounded and most of all to me. When I was made useless as a soldier he sent me to be healed by your doctor. Had it not been for that I should have lost the use of my arms for months, if not for life, for we have none who can cure like your English doctors. Therefore I soon became fit to fight again, and so it will have been my own fault if I have not raised myself to honour at Jytak, at Deothal, and at Malaon. What else could I have meant?"

The reply told. Jaspao's tone and looks were so straightforward and his genial vanity so simple, that more than one of those who had previously had no doubt of the ensigns' guilt, began to view this re-

markably expressed letter in another light. General Ochterlony repressed a smile.

"But what did you mean by saying you would soon be able to drive our army away?" Crellin asked.

"Why, we had already taught you that the sepoys from Oudh and the men of the plains could not hope to take Jytak, and we had forced you to retire, and so I had hopes that you would soon leave the district altogether. I did not say that *that* would happen by Russail Sahib's help."

"Read the letter aloud, Captain Crellin," the general suggested. "In *Urdu* first, and then translate."

Crellin did so.

"A wrong interpretation may have been put upon it," was the president's comment. "Read casually it looks as though he meant that the force would be driven back owing to services rendered by Mr. Russell, but we must remember that Jaspao Thapa is not an accomplished correspondent and that he was using *Urdu*, a tongue foreign to him. I consider it very probable that the last sentence in his letter changed the subject entirely, and had no relation whatever to the previous sentence."

Jaspao had picked up a little English from Jack —and also from Sullivan, who had given him several short lessons during their travels,—but failing to understand this interruption, he continued:

"And, sahibs, I may tell you that just before I wrote that note a scout came in to report that an outpost had been withdrawn, proving that no attack would be expected in that quarter. I planned the

assault and led it, and I thought when I wrote that we should deal you a heavy blow, and so I was more confident."

Crellin again interpreted for the benefit of those who did not understand Hindustani. He then handed the witness the letter purporting to come from Jack.

"What do you make of that, Jaspao Sahib?" he asked, and the Gurkha witness pored over the writing for a time. At last he looked up and glared at the questioner, and there was anger in his eyes, and indignation in his voice.

"I do not understand it, but I know that Russail Sahib would never betray his countrymen. Why should he when he had twice preferred death to such dishonour?"

"Ask him to what he alludes," said the general, and Jaspao then related how Jack, when first captured and when his life was threatened, had refused to divulge the message he was taking to General Martindell; and how, later in the fort, the commandant had with difficulty been restrained from slaying the Englishman who refused to become a traitor.

These episodes were news to all, even to Frank, and a sensation was produced. General Ochterlony looked favourably upon the lad and O'Hanlon's jolly face beamed with a contented smile. His efforts to spring Jaspao upon the court were being crowned with success.

"Do you know this man?" Knowles suddenly asked, pointing to Singbir Lama, who was obviously ill at ease. Jaspao shook his head and addressed the captured Gurkha in *Khas-Kura*, and as the

fellow lamely stammered a reply, Jack's friend glared fiercely upon him.

"That is no Gurkha!" he angrily exclaimed. "He cannot even speak our language properly. What is he doing here?"

A buzz of excitement ran round the court. Here was a new development with a vengeance, for the man's nationality had not as yet been doubted.

"I *am* a Gurkha," Singbir Lama protested in *Urdu*, "but we speak different dialects."

"He is no Gurkha," Jaspao insisted. "He is not a Thakur, nor a Khas, nor a Magar, nor a Gurung."

Jaspao paused, as though struggling with some half-remembered words, and presently convulsed—and somewhat startled—the court with:

"Divil a bit av a Gurkha is he, bedad!"

The assembled officers roared; the tension was eased; and Jaspao looked in amazement from one to another. Surely, he thought, there could be nothing wrong with his rendering of the English tongue as taught him by the big sergeant! To cover his confusion he grinned with the rest, and harked back to *Urdu*.

"That man is a *paharia* (hillman), but not one of us. He is also a liar!—Why, there is the doctor who healed me!" he cried, pointing towards Doctor White.

"Doctor Sahib," he continued jubilantly, "they say that I signed my name on the day I visited you in camp, after you had bound up my wounds. Doctor Sahib, tell them if I could have done it."

The surgeon stared at the speaker with mouth wide open.

"What an ass I have been," he gasped. "What simple idiots we have all been, Knowles! To think that we could have proved the signatures a forgery from the first! Why, gentlemen, before he went into Dorricot's tent I had put both his arms in slings and bandaged him so that he could not move a finger. Why on earth did I not remember this before!"

Frank Dorricot, forgetting his position, looked at Jack and laughed. Brooks and Knowles cursed themselves for idiots to overlook this simple proof. They had racked their brains in order to find ingenious evidence of the boys' innocence, and this most easy of all had been neglected.

"Silence!" the president commanded, though not very angrily, as a burst of cheering broke forth, and many an officer who had looked upon Jack Russell and Frank Dorricot as contemptible traitors, now stepped forward to shake hands and apologize. Among the foremost of these was Captain Crellin.

"I am very glad indeed," he said simply.

"Clear the court!" the general ordered. "Gentlemen, consider your verdict."

Accused and the guard, witnesses and spectators left the tent.

Nathu Sunar, Jack's Narwali servant, had been squatting on his heels beneath a plane-tree just beyond the tent, in distress that his master was in trouble, but unable to grasp the full meaning of it all. Nathu Sunar had become devotedly attached to the ensign, and occasionally he would show his gratitude in an embarrassing manner, objecting vigorously to the serving of his master by other Asiatics in whatever

capacity. At various times and in divers places he had put to flight mild Hindus and obsequious Mohammedans who were simply attempting to perform their duties.

On the room being cleared the witnesses and guard had to pass across an open space from the large tent in which the trial had been held to the one in which witnesses and accused had to wait. Captain O'Hanlon was one of the first to leave the court, and Nathu Sunar sidled towards him, salaamed and asked what had happened to his sahib.

"It is not yet finished," he replied. "Look, here he comes."

The prisoners passed with their escort, and O'Hanlon noticed the look of devotion as the servant's eyes followed his master.

"Jack Russell did a good thing when he saved that fellow's life," the Irish officer opined to himself. His opinion was shortly to receive a startling proof.

For O'Hanlon saw the ex-brigand's jaw drop and his mouth open. The man's eyes were fixed upon Singbir Lama as though fascinated, and a wild hope gripped the Irishman.

"Do you know that Gurkha, Nathu Sunar?" he whispered.

"Well do I know him, sahib, though he is not a Gurkhali, but a Narwali. What does he here in that dress?"

"A Narwali? Art thou sure?"

"Sahib, his name is Jit Sing Negi and I have known him from childhood. Somehow he has changed his face to look more like a Gurkha—perchance by

magic, but that scar across his cheek I know well."

"Canst thou swear to it?"

"When Jit Sing Negi was a child of ten, Carruthers *Bahadur* was shooting with his father Nain Sing Negi, a captain in the bodyguard of the Raja of Narwal, of which my own father was also a soldier. One night Jit Sing was playing with the big dog belonging to the Englishman, just outside the hut, when a leopard crept up, seized the dog and was about to carry it away. Little Jit Sing screamed for help and struck the beast with a stick, and the leopard knocked him down and was about to slay the lad, when Carruthers Sahib rushed out with sword drawn and the brute fled. Jit Sing became a great pet of the English sahib who loved him for his courage. That mark he will carry to his grave. He is a brave man, but an evil one."

"Then thou wilt know the son of Carruthers Sahib? and perhaps his servant Guman Rawat?"

"Surely I know him well."

"Didst thou not see him just now?"

"Nay, is he here? I had eyes only for my master. And Guman Rawat the sahib says? Of a surety he will be the cousin of Jit Sing."

O'Hanlon went nearly mad with delight, for here was the solution of the mystery, the fog that had enveloped them showed signs of lifting, and by the aid of the outlaw whom Jack had delivered from the vengeance of the men of Arjal, would this be effected.

The Irishman could hardly contain himself when the order was given to return that the verdict might be pronounced.

Captain O'Hanlon quickly sent a messenger to find Guman Rawat and order him to attend his master, and, taking the Narwali's arm, he led him inside the tent.

"See," said he, "there is Carruthers sahib. Go and salute him, and ask why Jit Sing is disguised. Jit Sing is a scoundrel, but his master is a greater one."

Approaching Carruthers with great humility, Nathu Sunar bowed to the ground and O'Hanlon quietly drew near.

"My lord," said the Narwali, pointing towards the pretended Gurkha, "thy servant is Nathu Sunar from Narwal. Why has Jit Sing Negi become a Gurkha?"

Carruthers winced as though he had been flicked with a whip.

"Thou dog!" he hissed in a whisper. "That is not Jit Sing. On thy life say not a word more."

The general cleared his throat and rose to pronounce the verdict and at the same moment Guman Rawat entered the tent, O'Hanlon having given orders that he was to be admitted. Guman Rawat silently glided to the side of his master to learn his wishes, as General Ochterlony began.

"The verdict of the court is, I am glad to say, that Ensigns Russell and Dorricot are guiltless of the abominable charge brought against them—Silence!"

A storm of cheering burst forth, for since the hearing of Jaspao's evidence, it was felt that our two boys had been the victims of some vile conspiracy.

"Silence!" thundered the general again. "I wish to explain the keen regret we feel for all that they must have suffered whilst this cloud was hanging over them, and to assure them of our hearty co-operation in any attempts to unmask the real criminal. I have great pleasure in returning your swords, gentlemen."

General Ochterlony stepped forward, handed Jack and Frank their swords and shook hands. The boys were very happy; the load of care had slipped from their backs.

"General Ochterlony!" O'Hanlon impetuously broke in, as the cheering was renewed. "I have just discovered a witness who can clear up the rest of the mystery, and can prove that this Singbir Lama is a man from Narwal,—a place of which Mr. Carruthers has perhaps heard."

He pushed forward the reluctant and terrified Nathu Sunar.

"You know that man then?" the general asked him.

Nathu Sunar stammered out an incoherent reply and was ordered to speak up. The witness remained silent, looking anxiously towards Carruthers, who with his eyes motioned him to turn away.

"What is the matter with your witness, Captain O'Hanlon? He seems little inclined to clear anything up.

"I will tell you, sir," cried the fusilier captain. "He is afraid to reply. I just heard Ensign Carruthers threaten his life if he dared say a word. He can prove that this pretended Gurkha is a cousin of Guman Rawat, that servant of Mr. Carruthers."

Jack and Frank, Knowles and Brooks and particularly Colonel Gregory—who had been the last of the officers composing the court to acknowledge the innocence of his two ensigns—glanced in amazement from O'Hanlon to Carruthers. Jack's enemy had turned pale with fear and rage.

"It is a lie!" he screamed.

Jaspao Thapa had understood little of this scene, but he perceived that something was causing intense excitement. Looking in the direction in which the others gazed, his eyes fell upon Guman Rawat, and at him he stared with wide-open mouth. Then he pointed towards the man and cried:

"That fellow is a traitor, sahibs. On the day that I made the acquaintance of my friend Russell Sahib, I was scouting along the outskirts of the English camp, when someone crept out also scouting. When he saw us, instead of running away he made signs, came towards us and said he was on the look-out for any Gurkhas, as he wanted us to know that two English officers who had treated him cruelly, were setting out for Jahi Tal that night with an important despatch. He set us on the track and that was the man. Slay him for a traitor."

"Arrest the fellow!" Ochterlony sternly ordered.

"It is false!" cried Carruthers. "Guman Rawat is a faithful servant. This is a conspiracy between Russell and that Gurkha who has bought his soul."

"General Ochterlony," said O'Hanlon, earnestly, "I assure you that neither Russell, nor Dorricot nor Captain Knowles knew that Jaspao Thapa was coming here. I kept it secret that there might be

no grounds to suspect a conspiracy. That man, Guman Rawat, has, so we believe, more than once conspired against Russell's life,—both he and his master."

The general looked hard at the virtuous pair and turned to Jack.

"Are they the persons you alluded to as enemies, Mr. Russell?" he asked.

"They are, sir."

"Oh. Well, Captain O'Hanlon can you make your witness speak now?"

"Nathu Sunar," the Irishman gravely entreated him, "Russell Sahib saved your life, so speak the truth to clear him from shame, and no one shall harm you."

Thus admonished the Narwali spoke up boldly, and repeated all he had told to O'Hanlon.

"You cur!" cried Colonel Gregory, starting from his place at the table and almost dancing, mad with rage and scorn, in front of his cousin. "You blackguardly hound!"

The game was up and Carruthers knew it. He was ruined and his life was forfeit, but revenge was still sweet and that he would have. Drawing forth a pistol, he took careful aim at Jack Russell and pulled the trigger. Quick as he was, still quicker was the son of Amar Sing, who stood beside him. A shimmer of steel flashed in the sunlight that poured through the canvas and as the traitor's finger pressed on the trigger, the kukri blade was buried in his neck.

Jit Sing Negi fell face forward, dead, shot through

the temple, and with a groan Carruthers swayed and collapsed in a heap on the floor, never to rise again. Jaspao's rapid stroke had saved Jack's life, and the bullet intended for him had closed for ever the career of Carruthers' partner in guilt, who had been standing close by our ensign.

For an instant nothing was heard save the indrawing of breath of the paralysed spectators. It was a dramatic ending to the trial. Then the crowd surged forward and Doctor White knelt beside the bleeding officer, a look of horror on his face.

"He is dead!" he presently asserted.

With a scream of rage Guman Rawat—a villain, but loyal to his master,—flung aside his guards and plunged a knife into Jaspao's breast. The Gurkha recoiled from the blow, and with a supreme effort struck the Hindu as he had done his master, and the two fell heavily to the ground.

CHAPTER XXII

GENERAL AMAR SING PAYS JACK A VISIT

"POOR Gregory will never be the same man again," said Knowles. "This has been a heavy blow to him."

"He has taken it as a disgrace to the family," Major Brooks replied. "Wrongly so I consider, for it was undoubtedly the Asiatic strain in Carruthers, that came out in that way,—not the English."

"I'm very sorry for the colonel," said Jack. "He was so very humble and apologetic to us both after the trial,—quite broken down, in fact."

"Ah, here comes White!"

Captain O'Hanlon had given a select little dinner-party on the evening following the trial, to celebrate the triumph of virtue in the shape of the two suspicious characters who figure in these pages as the heroes, the other guests being Knowles, Brooks and White, who had all been co-workers on the side of Justice. Immediately after dinner the surgeon had left them in order to pay another visit to the patient who was in all their thoughts. Jaspao Thapa was in a very critical condition, for though the knife had missed the heart and glanced off a rib, the wound it made was a very serious and dangerous one.

The afternoon bulletin had given grounds for hope, and Jack was in a state of feverish anxiety, impatient for the doctor's return. The three seniors were discussing impartially their cheroots and the different aspects of the complicated conspiracy that had just been defeated. Guman Rawat had succumbed within an hour or two.

"Well, doctor?"

"He's no worse, and that's a good sign. I think he'll pull through yet. He's a grand constitution."

"Hurrah!" Frank shouted, but Jack remained silent.

"Could we send for his father?" he suggested at length.

"Good idea!" said O'Hanlon. "The plucky fellow came here to help us out of a hole, and as his life is really in danger I think we ought to give the old man a chance of seeing him again."

"Besides," Brooks agreed, "we are in a way responsible to Amar Sing for his safety. If we can bring the general here and prove that we are doing all we can for his son, explanation will be made more easy. I'll undertake to put it before General Ochterlony and communicate if he has no objection."

Said the doctor:

"I can't forgive myself for being such an utter ass as to overlook the fact that he could not possibly have signed that precious document just after I had bandaged him."

"It's just those simple things that do get overlooked," Jack sagaciously observed, speaking with

the weight of authority and experience of nearly eighteen years. "What a good job it was that I saved Nathu Sunar! How curiously it has all turned out,—just because a blind beggar took it into his head to stand in front of the hotel at Whitchurch one morning. And he'll go down to his grave never dreaming that that simple act of his has caused the death of three men—possibly of four—and upset a whole regiment."

"I never heard that part of the story," the major observed.

"Nor I," put in the doctor.

So Jack related afresh the manner in which he had made the acquaintance of Carruthers, and the several attempts upon his life.

"Your Narwali servant was terrified by the result of his testimony, Jack," O'Hanlon observed. "He ran away, taking advantage of the confusion, but came back last night to tell me that he couldn't leave without knowing whether he had saved you from ruin. I tried to persuade him to remain, and promised him my powerful protection; and he replied that I was his father and his mother, but he must disappear quickly before the news reached the Rajah of Narwal, or he would be dogged and murdered by members of the Guman Rawat family. He said he hoped to come back and serve the young sahib, who was the Protector of the Poor, again after many years. And with that the poor fellow disappeared in the darkness."

O'Hanlon's servant entered and whispered to Major Brooks, who at once rose and with an

apology left the room. Presently he returned for a moment to inform his friends that the general had sent for him.

"Wonder what that's for?" White carelessly observed. "Now, Russell, you've told us of your past relations with Carruthers, so tell us what you make of the rest of this business. How do you suppose he's worked it?"

"Well, we can only guess," Jack replied. "It seems that when it was arranged that Dorricot and I should set out with the despatches for Martindell, he sent Guman Rawat to put the Gurkhas on the alert, and he had the good luck—or rather *bad*, as it turned out for him—to come across Jaspao."

"I suppose they made sure we should be killed by the Gurkhas," Frank chimed in. "The poor beggar's dead and I don't want to say anything harsh about him, but it must be a queer nature that 'ud take such a big revenge for so slight an injury."

"Then," Jack continued, "seeing how the plan had failed, Carruthers became very friendly with Dorricot and half begged my pardon for his outbursts of temper,—all this in order to divert suspicion. It wasn't necessary, as we never dreamt of suspecting him of having had a hand in *that*,—not even Frank, and he's as suspicious as a chimpanzee."

"At any rate he took you in, Jack, by his friend liness, though I warned you it was 'all my eye'."

"Don't crow, old man. Then happening to overhear us joking about Jaspao's famous letter, I

suppose the scheme of making us appear traitors suggested itself to him, and he stole the letter from Frank's tent, copied the signature and replaced it, then got this Jit Sing, or whatever his name was, to pose as a Gurkha, rigged him out in some dead man's uniform, and put him in the way of being caught."

"Then," Frank took up the word, "he shammed a belief in our honour to divert suspicion again, and he bamboozled Jack finely. Braddish indeed! Braddish may be a bully and a bit of a cad, but he has rather too much Briton in him to do that."

"It would have gone hard with you two," Knowles opined reflectively, "if Jaspao had not turned up at the right moment. By the way, has Braddish made any move since the trial?"

"Not a sign ... Ha! here's the major. Anything good, major?"

"Don't be too familiar with your C.O., young man," Brooke replied, and the twinkle in his eyes detracted from the sternness of his tone.

"What!" exclaimed Knowles. "Explain."

"Gregory has sent in his resignation. Can't hold up his head, poor beggar, after his cousin's disgrace, so I'm in command until further orders from the Powers that be. Ochterlony was rather complimentary, and hinted that he might recommend me for the vacancy."

"Hear! hear!" cried Jack. "Good thing for the regiment!"

"Don't howl, young 'un. I don't for a moment suppose I shall get it. There'll be a brand new

pink and white colonel from England waiting for us at Gorakabad, having scented the vacancy from afar, like a respectable and amiable vulture."

"Brooks," Knowles suggested, "what do you think of a presentation to Jaspao Thapa from the 162nd's Mess for his services to the regiment?"

"In what shape? It's treating him rather like a departing curate, ain't it?"

"I vote for a sword of honour," Knowles replied; "our fellows would be delighted to subscribe, for Jaspao is about the most popular personage alive with the 162nd just now."

"I'll think it over. Good night, O'Hanlon. I'm sorry I can't stay, but I must get to my new duties."

Jaspao Thapa soon took a turn for the better and, once started on the right course, the improvement was rapid. In the meanwhile Jack and Frank were honoured by an interview with the general, and though the great man said very little, they left him with the knowledge that he was well pleased with them. On the following day our hero received a proof that this was the case, for he found himself posted to the Tipperary Fusiliers as a lieutenant in O'Hanlon's company.

Sorry though he was to sever the connection with his old regiment, he was naturally delighted with this promotion after little more than two years' service. Frank Dorricot congratulated his chum with all the warmth of his true-hearted nature, and without the least touch of jealousy of a comrade's good fortune, for he acknowledged that Jack Russell had not only had had opportunities of distinction that

had been denied to him, but that he had also made the best use of them.

Major Brooks was soon able to report that General Amar Sing had gladly accepted the invitation to see his invalid son, and that the visit would be made incognito. In the course of a few days the lion-hearted veteran made his appearance, plainly dressed and with only two attendants. He was conducted to the tent of the officer commanding the 162nd, and there introduced to the few who were aware of the rank of their visitor. The British officers treated the Gurkha general with the deference and respect due to one of his rank who was also a hero.

Jack alone accompanied him to the tent in which lay Jaspao, now well enough to converse; and our lieutenant remained outside until father and son sent to request him to join them.

As he entered the tent Jack drew himself up and saluted. The Gurkha hero rose and ceremoniously returned the salute, and Jaspao, grinning contentedly, looked from one to the other with evident affection. His English friend had paid him many visits of late, and the sturdy little Himalayan had been well pleased by the various proofs of his popularity among the British soldiers. Amar Sing motioned the lieutenant to be seated, but Jack, determined to treat the Gurkha commander-in-chief with the same deference he would have accorded to an English officer of high rank, refused the courteous offer and remained standing erect at attention. The old general was pleased by this sign of respect.

"Thy friend is a true soldier, Jaspao," said the

veteran, smiling. He then continued: "Russell Sahib, I have heard much of thee from my son, who hath acquired a wondrous liking for his English friend. Thou art a brave lad and so is he, and brave men should be friends whether their skins be dark or light. We Gurkhas have fought you English, and both have proved honourable and courageous opponents, but I know now that ye are a greater and more powerful nation, and that ye have resources that we do not comprehend, and that in the end ye must always win. My desire then is that as thou and my son Jaspao are friends, so may all Englishmen and Gurkhas be good and loyal comrades and allies, for we have many virtues in common."

With becoming respect Jack made answer:

"For my part, sir, there is nothing I desire so greatly, for I have learned to respect and admire your countrymen both as soldiers and as men; and I can never forget the friendship and courtesy shown me in time of trouble by your son, whom I am proud to call my friend and brother. I shall deserve to be an outcast among men if ever I forget that. All my friends and comrades shall know what I think, and should I be so fortunate as to rise in my profession, my endeavour shall always be to promote goodwill and friendship between our races."

"Englishmen and Gurkhas ought to be good friends and allies," Amar Sing went on. "Our country is large enough and rich enough for us, for our numbers are few and our subjects are many. But you white men must not try to take away our independence or it will be a fight to the death, and this war that

is just ended will count as nothing to what will happen then. We Gurkhas are brave in battle, but we have many failings and are not always wise in council. Some day, perchance, a sagacious statesman may arise in our midst to bind our nations together in friendship.

The old general's wish was destined to be fulfilled. Many years later a great statesman and warrior did rise up to rule Nepal, and—usurper and intriguer though he was, stained with the vices of the Nepal court,—he piloted that kingdom safely through the troublous times of the Great Mutiny. His subjects in the Company's Gurkha battalions remained loyal to a man—and this can be said of none other of the many races that made up the Bengal army!—and they fought like little demons and prevailed against the traitors. He led his own regiments down to Lucknow and assisted Sir Colin Campbell to capture that city; and when Nana Sahib and his blood-stained host of defeated sepoys attempted to take refuge in the mountains and jungles of Nepal, he swept them out, disarmed and scattered them.

He was the mighty Shikarri, the greatest slayer of tigers since the world began, the Maharaja Sir Jung Bahadur, Prime Minister of Nepal.

CHAPTER XXIII

OUR HERO FINDS A NEW CHUM AND FRANK HAS TO TAKE SECOND PLACE

LIEUTENANT RUSSELL had said good-bye to his Gurkha friend; the officers of the 162nd had presented Jaspao Thapa with a silver-hilted sword, and Jack had given the man, who had saved his honour and good name, a memento that nearly sent Jaspao wild with delight. He had sent to Calcutta for the best sporting rifle that money could purchase, and the *subadar*—now almost himself again—was never tired of handling this new and wonderful weapon, the like of which he had never seen, testing the toy's mechanism, childlike, until the rifle stood in risk of being ruined.

The 162nd had returned to Gorakabad and the Tipperary Fusiliers with them, and for some time peace reigned in Hindustan. The next few months passed quietly in a humdrum fashion contrasting greatly with our hero's former experiences in India. Of late Jack had heard nothing of Jaspao Thapa, nor of Nathu Sunar, and Braddish had returned to England. Frank and his other friends of the 162nd he frequently met, as they were quartered with the Fusiliers until the latter corps should return to Europe; for the Irishmen, unlike Jack's old regiment, had been for many years in the East.

The daily round of duties had been wearily performed throughout the long summer days, and now autumn had come and winter was within sight—winter according to the calendar, though you might not have recognized the season at Gorakabad,—when something arrived to stir the blood of all Britons stationed there, and send a glow through their whole beings.

One day in the late autumn after the morning parade Jack strolled over to the quarters of his old regiment, and as he drew near he began to fear that the camp had gone crazy. Men suddenly dropped spades and buckets; others threw down the muskets and accoutrements they were cleaning and hurried to join a rapidly increasing mob of soldiers who were crowding round a group of officers. To his astonishment he saw Major Brooks, Captain Knowles, and other staid and respectable officers of the 162nd behaving with rather less dignity and formality than the average schoolboy, laughing, talking rapidly and gesticulating, in their excitement. Suddenly a loud cheer went up from the crowd, and those who had been so fortunate as to hear the news, turned round to impart the same to the fresh hordes that came running up. Round after round of hurrahs burst forth in rapid succession; the cheering increased in vigour, and soldiers old and young danced and howled for joy. Some played leap-frog, others slapped their comrades on the back in ardent and heavy manifestation of their ecstatic state of mind. What could this Bedlam mean?

Jack hastened towards them.

"What's the row?" he asked breathlessly, running up to the nearest soldier who, after having been roughly turned right side uppermost (for he was standing on his head when accosted by Jack) proved to be an ensign of his late corps.

"Row? Glory Hallelujah! Didn't you hear, you deaf adder?—Hullo! it's you, Russell. Haven't you Paddies got the news yet? What d'you think? Wellington's met Boney at last and smashed the froggies to smithereens! Taken over 200 cannon, dunno how many eagles and colours, and killed or captured——oh, *millions!* Hurrah! Hurrah!!"

"Hurrah!" Jack yelled, for the lad's enthusiasm was catching. "Three cheers for Wellington!" Then as Captain Knowles passed, he added, "Is it true? Have they done for him?"

"I believe so, Jack. I understand that there has been such a battle as has never been fought before, and the victory could hardly have been more complete."

"When was it, Knowles, and where?"

"Last June," Knowles replied, "somewhere in Belgium, but I forget the name of the place,—something to do with 'river' or 'water,' I fancy."

And this was how Jack Russell first heard the news of Waterloo.

Returning to his own quarters where a similar scene was now being enacted, Jack found that the same mail had brought two letters for him. Sir John and Lady Russell had heard of his capture and imprisonment in Jytak, and at the time of writing were still ignorant concerning their son's fate.

They wrote in the hope that he might have been released by now, and the general's letter gave Jack fuller particulars of the great battle and told of the joy and relief with which the news had been received in England.

With the New Year came disquieting news from Nepal. Though General Amar Sing Thapa and the best men among the Gurkhas understood that the British were too strong for them, the Court of Nepal contained a number of intriguers who were not yet satisfied. Overcoming the opposition of the Commander-in-Chief and of the Prime Minister, Bhim Sen Thapa,—the uncle of Gambir Sing, who by the way had recovered from his wounds,—they again declared war against the British.

The prompt despatch of a strong force, together with the arguments of the more sensible among the Gurkha chieftains, prevailed, fortunately before fighting on a large scale had taken place; the Nepal Government saw the error of its ways, and peace was made. Since the year 1816 the Kingdom of Nepal has proved a friendly and useful ally of the British Empire. A number of the Gurkha soldiers, impressed by the courage of their white foemen, whom they regarded as worthy of their steel, professed a readiness to fight under the British flag against Pathan, Sikh, or Jat aggressors, and a couple of Gurkha battalions were formed. These were destined to become famous in history as the Nasiri and Sirmur battalions, and the former in 1852, by assuming the title of *The 66th Bengal Infantry*, checked for a time the mutinous spirit that was

already asserting itself. It happened in this wise. The high-caste Hindu sepoys of Bengal were growing too presumptuous; their priests were boasting that they held the fate of the British in their hands, and that by issuing a decree forbidding their co-religionists to enlist, the British power in Asia would be gone. Convinced, therefore, that the authorities would not dare to punish them, the Brahminical 66th became insolent. But they had reckoned without their host. The fiery Commander-in-Chief, Sir Charles Napier, could not brook impertinence. He promptly disbanded the regiment and gave their colours and title to the Nasiri irregulars. The Brahmans were aghast; they saw that their places could be filled by these little foreigners of their own religion, who were soldiers to the backbone and who paid more attention to a wink from their English officer than to all the decrees and excommunications of all the Brahmin priests in the world, and the plague was stayed. But the incident cost Sir Charles Napier his position. He had acted on his own authority without consulting the Governor-General, and as a result of the latter's disapproval, the Commander-in-Chief sent in his resignation.

This Nasiri corps eventually became the present *1st Gurkha Rifles*. The Sirmur battalion, after its magnificent record during the Sikh War and the Mutiny, changed its name to the *2nd Gurkhas* (*The Prince of Wales' Own*). Most of you will have read of the feat of this regiment a few years ago, at Dargai, when, with the Gordon Highlanders, they stormed that peak and drove the Afridis down.

As British officers were wanted for these new corps, our friends Russell and Dorricot volunteered for the service. Their conduct having been extolled by General Ochterlony and Colonel Brooks, and Jack's knowledge of Gurkhas and their language having been taken into account, they were accepted as lieutenants of the Sirmur battalion. Hearing of this, Jaspao Thapa offered to take the post of subadar in the same corps, so attached had he become to his young friend. The offer was gladly accepted and he too became an officer of the famous battalion upon which, forty-one years later, when the British seemed on the point of losing India, all eyes were fixed; for to the Sirmur battalion was given the post of honour and of danger at the siege of Delhi, and so nobly did they fulfil their trust that they rank as perhaps the most famous, of Indian regiments. If not *the* most famous, they at least share that honour with their frontier comrades of the Guide Corps.

* * *

When we see that our friend Lieutenant Russell has taken it upon himself to govern men of an alien race, to be their father and brother, their precept and example, we can no longer consider him as a boy, and the story of his adventures should now be closed. For the benefit of those indulgent readers who wish to know "And what happened to him after that?" this closing chapter will relate in brief our hero's subsequent career.

The Gurkha recruits were awkward, grinning, dirty lads, who spoke neither Hindustani nor English; honest, truthful and merry, but slow of understanding; quick to resent anything in the nature of an insult, but capable of a dog's affection and devotion towards their officers.

Before Jack and Frank had been twelve months in the Sirmur battalion they had completely won the confidence and love of their little men, who considered nothing more desirable than an opportunity to follow them into the jaws of death. What quality is it that makes young Britons—in spite of our many national failings—such trusted leaders of men? Why should these fierce and independent warriors take a pride in obeying blindly the orders of their British officers, men no braver than themselves, their foemen a year ago? Why should they be so eager to gain a word of praise from their alien leaders, and so ready to give their lives for the white man who has brought them face to face with death?

Partly, I think, because the young Englishman seeks danger with a greater zest than any other man. Frenchmen and Germans may confront danger with equal courage, but as a rule they are not mad enough to go out of their way to seek hardships and peril for mere love of overcoming the same. Why indeed should they? Britons are mad—and let us thank God for it! The Gurkha sees this love of danger on his officer's part; the Sikh sees it, and so does the Pathan; and it appeals to them. As for the Gurkha, he also loves danger for its own

sake, and is merry under the greatest hardships and privations, looking towards his officer with a grin when they both stand face to face with death.

Other qualities that appeal to these wild races are the Englishman's fairness, love of justice, and sportmanship. And perhaps this also. We have lately read a deal of harsh criticism of the British officer's misguided and deplorable passion for polo, football, and similar games. The example of the studious German and scientific French officer, who waste not their time on boyish sports, is held up to our fellows. Granted that every man ought to study his profession, still a fair proportion of an officer's time may be profitably spent in games of skill and strength.

For the qualities of quickness and physical fitness, judgment and esprit-de-corps needed to excel therein, can only be taught by practice, not by study, and these qualities are most useful in time of war.

The British officer who leads his Gurkhas to storm some seemingly impregnable Pathan or Hunza stronghold, and having conquered the place, picks out a bit of level ground, improvises goal-posts, manufactures a ball, and sets his men to play a football match against their late foes, will be devotedly followed by victors and vanquished and will gain much greater influence over these hardy warrior races than could be attained by the most assiduous scientific study of his profession.

But to return to our muttons. For some time Jack and Frank were busily engaged in drilling and training their men. The Sirmur Gurkhas were

slow to learn, but having once picked up their drill they became smart and keen, taking great pride in their battalion, destined to become so famous. The corps took part in the siege and capture of the renowned Jat fortress of Bhurtpore in the year 1819, and both our lads distinguished themselves there. Jack to his great delight was able to pay back a part of the debt he owed to Jaspao Thapa by saving the subadar's life. For throughout the assault, wherever the Jats were gathered together there would Jaspao be, in the thick of the fighting. The big Jats are brave men—most of the Sikhs are of the Jat race—and once when Jaspao charged alone into half a dozen of them they nearly brought his career to a close, and had not Jack perceived his little comrade's danger, and followed close behind with one or two men, a new subadar would have been wanted for that company.

The Bhurtpore campaign was the first in which Britons and Gurkhas fought shoulder to shoulder, and here began that comical but hearty friendship and "chumming" which has lasted ever since, "Johnny Gurkha" being the only Asiatic whom "Tommy Atkins" will at all times treat as a "pal" as readily as he would any of his own countrymen.

A few years after this Captain Russell returned to England, and those were glorious days at Claydon Manor House, the happiest days that Lady Russell had known for many years, and no less delighted was the general. He was proud of his son, for the Tipperary Fusiliers were stationed at Chester and

Major O'Hanlon had visited Claydon and had given Sir John and Lady Russell a much more glowing account of their boy's adventures than Jack himself had seen fit to write home. Jack spent more than one jolly day with his Irish comrades in the "rare old" city, and was boisterously welcomed by Sergeant-Major Sullivan and Sergeant O'Grady,—for the simple, good-natured Larry had been thrice promoted.

A more lengthy visit had also to be paid. In fulfilment of a promise made to Frank, our hero journeyed into Westmoreland and introduced himself to the mother of his chum. Mrs. Dorricot, a stately and still beautiful lady of middle age, received her visitor warmly.

"You are hardly a stranger, Captain Russell. Frank has described you so often and his letters have for many years been full of you. It is very good of you to spend a portion of your precious leave with me. Mary, this is Captain Russell."

A young lady had just entered the room, and Jack found to his surprise and confusion—poor fellow, he had not yet conquered his shyness!—that the sister to whom Frank had always alluded as a mere child of doll-nursing propensities, was neither more nor less than a most beautiful and bewitching girl of twenty.

He stayed ten days in Westmoreland and the widow grieved at his departure. For he had been singing the praises of her only son, and had shown himself a staunch comrade and loyal friend, and Mrs. Dorricot could never hear too much of her boy's doings and sayings.

One listener, however, though eager enough to hear of Frank's daring and resource, and proud enough that he was her brother, yet could not help thinking that the narrator effaced himself in order to magnify his chum, and would dearly have liked to hear Frank's opinion of Captain Russell.

The parting was a time of black despair for Jack. On the last day of his visit he told himself again and again that he *must* say something to Mary Dorricot. He could not bear the thought of returning to India without having declared his love, and yet when the opportunity offered he felt that he would rather storm Bhurtpore or Kalunga over again than tell her, whom he considered the sweetest and most gracious lady in the land, that he had the presumption to love her. How could he hope that one so dainty and charming would stoop to a blundering, thick-headed soldier like Jack Russell. It was absurd! Of course he must not risk her precious friendship by such an impertinence!

And so he allowed the opportunity to slip by, and two hearts were sad as he pressed her hand and drove away.

* * *

"Do you know, George," Margaret Russell pensively observed a few days after Jack's return to Claydon, to her husband the squire. She interrupted herself in order to bite off a length of sewing cotton, and Jack's cousin looked up from his newspaper.

"Do I know George? Which George?" he replied thoughtfully.

"Are you aware, George," Mrs. Russell continued, eyeing her frivolous husband sternly, "that Jack is very much in love?"

"Poor fellow, I hadn't noticed it. His appetite at dinner to-night seemed as good as ever. And with whom, pray? Some dusky beauty?"

"With the Dorricot girl—the sister of his chum, of course. How stupid men are!"

"Oh! And he has been confiding in you?"

"Certainly not. Jack's much too shy to do that. But it's so plain, so perfectly obvious."

Mr. George Russell tore off a strip of his newspaper, held it in the flame, and applied the light to his pipe before replying.

"You're a little witch, Margaret," he observed at length. "How is it that women can always make these discoveries? Alas! for the inconstancy of youth, for I thought Jack was in love with you a few years ago, and I'm sure he shows wretched bad taste to change his mind, my dear."

"You base flatterer, do you know what I am going to do?"

"Do I ever know that, Mrs. Russell? Do you not invariably act exactly as seems best in your own eyes?"

"Well, I mean to write and invite Mrs. Dorricot and her daughter here, in order to give the poor boy a chance. Mrs. Dorricot will be only too glad to see more of her son's friend."

"Indeed, madame, and is the master of the house to be consulted?"

"Not in the least. I have arranged it all in my

mind, but you must not tell Jack until we have heard from Mrs. Dorricot. It would be cruel to raise his hopes. And if she's a really nice girl, I'll take care that the poor things make up their minds before the week is over."

Mr. Russell gazed at the sparkling eyes of his lovely wife and laughed softly.

"You'll marry them in spite of themselves I do believe," he observed. "Have your own way, you charming little match-maker."

"That is exactly what I mean to have, sir."

And Margaret Russell had her own way. And Jack had his,—but wasn't he horribly scared! And when Mrs. Dorricot had been assured that the Sirmur Battalion was stationed permanently in one of the healthy hill-stations, she gave her consent to an early marriage.

* * *

It was an afternoon in October that Frank Dorricot went out with Jaspao Thapa, the subadar-major, to meet the *ekka* that brought Captain and Mrs. Russell to Dehra Dun. He kissed his sister warmly and turned a sorrowful face towards his old comrade, as Jack shook hands with Jaspao and introduced Mary to his Gurkha friend.

"Ah, Jack, Jack," Frank murmured, shaking his head in comical reproach, "I guess I shall have to play second fiddle now. You've found another chum."

THE END.

University of California
SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
405 Hilgard Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90024-1388
Return this material to the library
from which it was borrowed.

S R L F

SEE SPINE FOR BARCODE NUMBER

Un